

PS2472 .T57 1967

Norris, Frank, 1870-1902.

The third circle ; A deal in
wheat, and other stories of
the new and old West

THE THIRD CIRCLE
A DEATH IN WHEAT

THE THIRD CIRCLE

FRANK M. DRAKE

TRAILER P.

(I)

THE THIRD CIRCLE

(II)

A DEAL IN WHEAT

AND OTHER STORIES OF THE
NEW AND OLD WEST

BY

FRANK NORRIS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY WILL IRWIN

VOLUME IV

KENNIKAT PRESS, INC./PORT WASHINGTON, N. Y.

N793t

71557

COMPLETE WORKS OF FRANK NORRIS Volume IV

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No: 67-16621

Manufactured in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

I succeeded Frank Norris as sub-editor of the San Francisco *Wave*, a weekly periodical with more lives than a cat. My duties included "putting the paper to bed." This ceremony began on Tuesday night. We were working short-handed, as all unprosperous weeklies do; and that Tuesday usually stretched itself out into Wednesday. Most often, indeed, the foreman did not pound the last quoin into place and draw the last page-proof until four or five o'clock on Wednesday morning. Then home with the milk wagons.

To Yelton, most patient and cheerful of foremen, those Tuesday-night sessions meant steady work. For my part, I had only to write a "caption" now and then or run over a proof. In the intervals of waiting, I killed time and improved my mind by reading files of the *Wave*, and especially that part of them which preserved the prentice work of Frank Norris.

In those days San Francisco had a literary tradition and atmosphere. The very bartenders were trying their hands at writing. To all of us aspirants, he was the local hero—this young adventurer whom an Eastern publishing firm, upon seeing his work on the *Wave*, had called to the wider field. He had begun his series of large and virile novels with *Moran of the "Lady Letty"* and *McTeague* and the East had already confirmed our judgment by announcing the rise of a new literary force.

With a special interest then did I, his disciple and follower, trace his work through his first brief, thumbnail sketches of the town, through a series of rough, brilliant short stories about our Port of Adventure, to

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that colourful serial which led him into his own. I read and reread until I could have recited some of the shorter sketches from memory. Of course, I was searching for his secret. It still eludes me!

But also, I was making a unique study of a novelist in process of formation, J. O'Hara Cosgrave, editor and burden bearer of the *Wave*, was more of an artist than a business man; realizing what he had, Cosgrave gave Norris his head. Certain unsigned sketches and fragments, in the files of the year 1895, bore his unmistakable touch. These grew into "Little Stories of the Pavement" to which he began signing his name. Then came longer stories at the intense pace of one a week—even such masterpieces as "The Third Circle" and "Miracle Joyeaux." The Norris cycle of the *Wave* ended with a novel, written feuillton fashion week by week—*Moran of the "Lady Letty."* A curious circumstance attended the publication of this story. He began it in the last weeks of 1897—sending the copy sheet by sheet to the printer as part of his weekly stint. The *Maine* was blown up in Havana harbour on February 14, 1898. In the later chapters of *Moran*, he introduced as an incident the *Maine* affair and the outbreak of the Spanish-American War! This serial came to the attention of *McClure's Magazine*: it was the cause of his removal to the East.

"The studio sketches of a great novelist," Gelett Burgess has called these ventures and fragments. Burgess and I, when the *Wave* died—finally and permanently—raided the building by night and took away one set of old files. We regarded this as a harmless theft of sentiment, for no one else really needed them and we were the sole survivors in California of that group which had helped to make the *Wave*. Heaven vindicated us: but for our crime they would have perished in the great fire of 1906. We spent that night running over

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them, marvelling again at those masterly creations which Norris had made from that city of his first love. . . . A year later, he returned to San Francisco to die.

Here are collected the longest and most important of these prentice products, together with a half a dozen stories published just after he went East. These last have perhaps less of the exuberant joy in young composition, but more art and understanding. They are the best of that early work in the *Wave*: a study in the way a genius takes to find himself. It is as though we had before us a complete collection of Rembrandt's youthful drawings and sketches; the basic force and vision present from the first; technique and observations of life still finding their way. Admirable in themselves, these rough-hewn tales are most interesting in comparison with that later work which the world knows better. Above all his other qualities, Norris possessed the power of growth. If the fates had only spared him, this quality, with all else that he had, must have led him to the highest achievement in letters.

WILL IRWIN.

September, 1927

THE THIRD CIRCLE

THE THIRD CIRCLE

THREE are more things in San Francisco's Chinatown than are dreamed of in Heaven and earth. In reality there are three parts of Chinatown—the part the guides show you, the part the guides don't show you, and the part that no one ever hears of. It is with the latter part that this story has to do. There are a good many stories that might be written about this third circle of Chinatown, but believe me, they never will be written—at any rate not until the "town" has been, as it were, drained off from the city, as one might drain a noisome swamp, and we shall be able to see the strange, dreadful life that wallows down there in the lowest ooze of the place—wallows and grovels there in the mud and in the dark. If you don't think this is true, ask some of the Chinese detectives (the regular squad are not to be relied on), ask them to tell you the story of the Lee On Ting affair, or ask them what was done to old Wong Sam, who thought he could break up the trade in slave girls, or why Mr. Clarence Lowney (he was a clergyman from Minnesota who believed in direct methods) is now a "dangerous" inmate of the State Asylum—ask them to tell you why Matsokura, the Japanese dentist, went back to his home lacking a face—ask them to tell you why the murderers of Little Pete will never be found, and ask them to tell you about the little slave girl, Sing Yee, or—no, on the second thought, don't ask for that story.

The tale I am to tell you now began some twenty years ago in a See Yup restaurant on Waverly Place—long since torn down—where it will end I do not know.

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I think it is still going on. It began when young Hillegas and Miss Ten Eyck (they were from the East, and engaged to be married) found their way into the restaurant of the Seventy Moons, late in the evening of a day in March. (It was the year after the downfall of Kearney and the discomfiture of the sand-lotters.)

"What a dear, quaint, curious old place!" exclaimed Miss Ten Eyck.

She sat down on an ebony stool with its marble seat, and let her gloved hands fall into her lap, looking about her at the huge hanging lanterns, the gilded carven screens, the lacquer work, the inlay work, the coloured glass, the dwarf oak trees growing in Satsuma pots, the marquetry, the painted matting, the incense jars of brass, high as a man's head, and all the grotesque jim-crackery of the Orient. The restaurant was deserted at that hour. Young Hillegas pulled up a stool opposite her and leaned his elbows on the table, pushing back his hat and fumbling for a cigarette.

"Might just as well be in China itself," he commented.

"Might?" she retorted; "we are in China, Tom—a little bit of China dug out and transplanted here. Fancy all America and the Nineteenth Century just around the corner! Look! You can even see the Palace Hotel from the window. See out yonder, over the roof of that temple—the Ming Yen, isn't it?—and I can actually make out Aunt Harriett's rooms."

"I say, Harry (Miss Ten Eyck's first name was Harriett), let's have some tea."

"Tom, you're a genius! Won't it be fun! Of course we must have some tea. What a lark! And you can smoke if you want to."

"This is the way one ought to see places," said Hillegas, as he lit a cigarette; "just nose around by yourself and discover things. Now, the guides never brought us here."

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"No, they never did. I wonder why? Why, we just found it out by ourselves. It's ours, isn't it, Tom, dear, by right of discovery?"

At that moment Hillegas was sure that Miss Ten Eyck was quite the most beautiful girl he ever remembered to have seen. There was a daintiness about her—a certain chic trimness in her smart tailor-made gown, and the least perceptible tilt of her crisp hat that gave her the last charm. Pretty she certainly was—the fresh, vigorous, healthful prettiness only seen in certain types of unmixed American stock. All at once Hillegas reached across the table, and, taking her hand, kissed the little crumpled round of flesh that showed where her glove buttoned.

The China boy appeared to take their order, and while waiting for their tea, dried almonds, candied fruit, and watermelon rinds, the pair wandered out upon the overhanging balcony and looked down into the darkening streets.

"There's that fortune-teller again," observed Hillegas, presently. "See—down there on the steps of the joss house?"

"Where? Oh, yes, I see."

"Let's have him up. Shall we? We'll have him tell our fortunes while we're waiting."

Hillegas called and beckoned, and at last got the fellow up into the restaurant.

"Hoh! You're no Chinaman," said he, as the fortuneteller came into the circle of the lantern light. The other showed his brown teeth.

"Part Chinaman, part Kanaka."

"Kanaka?"

"All same Honolulu. Sabe? Mother Kanaka lady—washum clothes for sailor peoples down Kauai way," and he laughed as though it were a huge joke.

"Well, say, Jim," said Hillegas; "we want you to

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tell our fortunes. You sabe? Tell the lady's fortune. Who she going to marry, for instance."

"No fortune—tattoo."

"Tattoo?"

"Um. All same tattoo—three, four, seven, plenty lil birds on lady's arm. Hey? You want tattoo?"

He drew a tattooing needle from his sleeve and motioned toward Miss Ten Eyck's arm.

"Tattoo my arm? What an idea! But wouldn't it be funny, Tom? Aunt Hattie's sister came back from Honolulu with the prettiest little butterfly tattooed on her finger. I've half a mind to try. And it would be so awfully queer and original."

"Let him do it on your finger, then. You never could wear evening dress if it was on your arm."

"Of course. He can tattoo something as though it was a ring, and my marquise can hide it."

The Kanaka-Chinaman drew a tiny fantastic-looking butterfly on a bit of paper with a blue pencil, licked the drawing a couple of times, and wrapped it about Miss Ten Eyck's little finger—the little finger of her left hand. The removal of the wet paper left an imprint of the drawing. Then he mixed his ink in a small sea-shell, dipped his needle, and in ten minutes had finished the tattooing of a grotesque little insect, as much butterfly as anything else.

"There," said Hillegas, when the work was done and the fortune-teller gone his way; "there you are, and it will never come out. It won't do for you now to plan a little burglary, or forge a little check, or slay a little baby for the coral round its neck, 'cause you can always be identified by that butterfly upon the little finger of your left hand."

"I'm almost sorry now I had it done. Won't it ever come out? Pshaw! Anyhow I think it's very chic," said Harriett Ten Eyck.

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"I say, though!" exclaimed Hillegas, jumping up; "where's our tea and cakes and things? It's getting late. We can't wait here all evening. I'll go out and jolly that chap along."

The Chinaman to whom he had given the order was not to be found on that floor of the restaurant. Hillegas descended the stairs to the kitchen. The place seemed empty of life. On the ground floor, however, where tea and raw silk were sold, Hillegas found a Chinaman figuring up accounts by means of little balls that slid to and fro upon rods. The Chinaman was a very gorgeous-looking chap in round horn spectacles and a costume that looked like a man's nightgown, of quilted blue satin.

"I say, John," said Hillegas to this one, "I want some tea. You sabe?—upstairs—restaurant. Give China boy order—he no come. Get plenty much move on. Hey?"

The merchant turned and looked at Hillegas over his spectacles.

"Ah," he said calmly, "I regret that you have been detained. You will, no doubt, be attended to presently. You are a stranger in Chinatown?"

"Ahem!—well, yes—I—we are."

"Without doubt—without doubt!" murmured the other.

"I suppose you are the proprietor?" ventured Hillegas.

"I? Oh, no! My agents have a silk house here. I believe they sub-let the upper floors to the See Yups. By the way, we have just received a consignment of India silk shawls you may be pleased to see."

He spread a pile upon the counter, and selected one that was particularly beautiful.

"Permit me," he remarked gravely, "to offer you this as a present to your good lady."

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Hillegas's interest in this extraordinary Oriental was aroused. Here was a side of the Chinese life he had not seen, nor even suspected. He stayed for some little while talking to this man, whose bearing might have been that of Cicero before the Senate assembled, and left him with the understanding to call upon him the next day at the Consulate. He returned to the restaurant to find Miss Ten Eyck gone. He never saw her again. No white man ever did.

* * * * *

There is a certain friend of mine in San Francisco who calls himself Manning. He is a Plaza bum—that is, he sleeps all day in the old Plaza (that shoal where so much human jetsom has been stranded), and during the night follows his own devices in Chinatown, one block above. Manning was at one time a deep-sea pearl diver in Oahu, and, having burst his ear drums in the business, can now blow smoke out of either ear. This accomplishment first endeared him to me, and latterly I found out that he knew more of Chinatown than is meet and right for a man to know. The other day I found Manning in the shade of the Stevenson ship, just rousing from the effects of a jag on undiluted gin, and told him, or rather recalled to him the story of Harriett Ten Eyck.

"I remember," he said, resting on an elbow and chewing grass. "It made a big noise at the time, but nothing ever came of it—nothing except a long row and the cutting down of one of Mr. Hillegas's Chinese detectives in Gambler's Alley. The See Yups brought a chap over from Peking just to do the business."

"Hachet-man?" said I.

"No," answered Manning, spitting green; "he was a two-knife Kai-Gingh."

"As how?"

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"Two knives—one in each hand—cross your arms and then draw 'em together, right and left, scissor-fashion—damn near slashed his man in two. He got five thousand for it. After that the detectives said they couldn't find much of a clue."

"And Miss Ten Eyck was not so much as heard from again?"

"No," answered Manning, biting his fingernails. "They took her to China, I guess, or maybe up to Oregon. That sort of thing was new twenty years ago, and that's why they raised such a row, I suppose. But there are plenty of women living with Chinamen now, and nobody thinks anything about it, and they are Canton Chinamen, too—lowest kind of coolies. There's one of them up in St. Louis Place, just back of the Chinese theatre, and she's a Sheeny. There's a queer team for you—the Hebrew and the Mongolian—and they've got a kid with red, crinkly hair, who's a rubber in a Hammam bath. Yes, it's a queer team, and there's three more white women in a slave-girl joint under Ah Yee's tan room. There's where I get my opium. They can talk a little English even yet. Funny thing—one of 'em's dumb, but if you get her drunk enough she'll talk a little English to you. It's a fact! I've seen 'em do it with her often—actually get her so drunk that she can talk. Tell you what," added Manning, struggling to his feet, "I'm going up there now to get some dope. You can come along, and we'll get Sadie (Sadie's her name), we'll get Sadie full, and ask her if she ever heard about Miss Ten Eyck. They do a big business," said Manning, as we went along. "There's Ah Yee and these three women and a policeman named Yank. They get all the yen shee—that's the cleanings of the opium pipes, you know, and make it into pills and smuggle it into the cons over at San Quentin prison by means of the trusties. Why, they'll make five dollars' worth of dope sell for

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thirty by the time it gets into the yard over at the Pen. When I was over there, I saw a chap knifed behind a jute mill for a pill as big as a pea. Ah Yee gets the stuff, the three women roll it into pills, and the policeman, Yank, gets it over to the trusties somehow. Ah Yee is independent rich by now, and the policeman's got a bank account."

"And the women?"

"Lord! they're slaves—Ah Yee's slaves! They get the swift kick most generally."

Manning and I found Sadie and her two companions four floors underneath the tan room, sitting cross-legged in a room about as big as a big trunk. I was sure they were Chinese women at first, until my eyes got accustomed to the darkness of the place. They were dressed in Chinese fashion, but I noted soon that their hair was brown and the bridges of each one's nose was high. They were rolling pills from a jar of yen shee that stood in the middle of the floor, their fingers twinkling with a rapidity that was somehow horrible to see.

Manning spoke to them briefly in Chinese while he lit a pipe, and two of them answered with the true Canton sing-song—all vowels and no consonants.

"That one's Sadie," said Manning, pointing to the third one, who remained silent the while. I turned to her. She was smoking a cigar, and from time to time spat through her teeth man-fashion. She was a dreadful-looking beast of a woman, wrinkled like a shrivelled apple, her teeth quite black from nicotine, her hands bony and prehensile, like a hawk's claws—but a white woman beyond all doubt. At first Sadie refused to drink, but the smell of Manning's can of gin removed her objections, and in half an hour she was hopelessly loquacious. What effect the alcohol had upon the paralyzed organs of her speech I cannot say. Sober, she was

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tongue-tied—drunk, she could emit a series of faint bird-like twitterings that sounded like a voice heard from the bottom of a well.

"Sadie," said Manning, blowing smoke out of his ears, "what makes you live with Chinamen? You're a white girl. You got people somewhere. Why don't you get back to them?"

Sadie shook her head.

"Like um China boy better," she said, in a voice so faint we had to stoop to listen. "Ah Yee's pretty good to us—plenty to eat, plenty to smoke, and as much yen shee as we can stand. Oh, I don't complain."

"You know you can get out of this whenever you want. Why don't you make a run for it some day when you're out? Cut for the Mission House on Sacramento Street—they'll be good to you there."

"Oh!" said Sadie, listlessly, rolling a pill between her stained palms, "I been here so long I guess I'm kind of used to it. I've about got out of white people's ways by now. They wouldn't let me have my yen shee and my cigar, and that's about all I want nowadays. You can't eat yen shee long and care for much else, you know. Pass that gin along, will you? I'm going to faint in a minute."

"Wait a minute," said I, my hand on Manning's arm. "How long have you been living with Chinamen, Sadie?"

"Oh, I don't know. All my life, I guess. I can't remember back very far—only spots here and there. Where's that gin you promised me?"

"Only in spots?" said I; "here a little and there a little—is that it? Can you remember how you came to take up with this kind of life?"

"Sometimes I can and sometimes I can't," answered Sadie. Suddenly her head rolled upon her shoulder, her eyes closing. Manning shook her roughly:

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"Let be! let be!" she exclaimed, rousing up; "I'm dead sleepy. Can't you see?"

"Wake up, and keep awake, if you can," said Manning; "this gentleman wants to ask you something."

"Ah Yee bought her from a sailor on a junk in the Pei Ho River," put in one of the other women.

"How about that, Sadie?" I asked. "Were you ever on a junk in a China river? Hey? Try and think?"

"I don't know," she said. "Sometimes I think I was. There's lots of things I can't explain, but it's because I can't remember far enough back."

"Did you ever hear of a girl named Ten Eyck—Harriett Ten Eyck—who was stolen by Chinamen here in San Francisco a long time ago?"

There was a long silence. Sadie looked straight before her, wide-eyed, the other women rolled pills industriously, Manning looked over my shoulder at the scene, still blowing smoke through his ears; then Sadie's eyes began to close and her head to loll sideways.

"My cigar's gone out," she muttered. "You said you'd have gin for me. Ten Eyck! Ten Eyck! No, I don't remember anybody named that." Her voice failed her suddenly, then she whispered:

"Say, how did I get that on me?"

She thrust out her left hand, and I saw a butterfly tattooed on the little finger.

THE HOUSE WITH THE BLINDS

IT IS a thing said and signed and implicitly believed in by the discerning few that San Francisco is a place wherein Things can happen. There are some cities like this—cities that have come to be picturesque—that offer opportunities in the matter of background and local colour, and are full of stories and dramas and novels, written and unwritten. There seems to be no adequate explanation for this state of things, but you can't go about the streets anywhere within a mile radius of Lotta's fountain without realizing the peculiarity, just as you would realize the hopelessness of making anything out of Chicago, fancy a novel about Chicago or Buffalo, let us say, or Nashville, Tennessee. There are just three big cities in the United States that are "story cities"—New York, of course, New Orleans, and best of the lot, San Francisco.

Here, if you put yourself in the way of it, you shall see life uncloaked and bare of convention—the raw, naked thing, that perplexes and fascinates—life that involves death of the sudden and swift variety, the jar and shock of unleashed passions, the friction of men foregathered from every ocean, and you may touch upon the edge of mysteries for which there is no explanation—little eddies on the surface of unsounded depths, sudden outflashings of the inexplicable—troublesome, disquieting, and a little fearful.

About this "House With the Blinds" now.

If you go far enough afield, with your face toward Telegraph Hill, beyond Chinatown, beyond the Barbary Coast, beyond the Mexican quarter and Luna's

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restaurant, beyond even the tamale factory and the Red House, you will come at length to a park in a strange, unfamiliar, unfrequented quarter. You will know the place by reason of a granite stone set up there by the Geodetic surveyors, for some longitudinal purposes of their own, and by an enormous flagstaff erected in the centre. Stockton Street flanks it on one side and Powell on the other. It is an Italian quarter as much as anything else, and the Societa Alleanza holds dances in a big white hall hard by. The Russian Church, with its minarets (that look for all the world like inverted balloons) overlook it on one side, and at the end of certain seaward streets you may see the masts and spars of wheat ships and the Asiatic steamers. The park lies in a valley between Russian and Telegraph Hills, and in August and early September the trades come flogging up from the bay, overwhelming one with sudden, bulging gusts that strike downward, blanketwise and bewildering. There are certain residences here where, I am sure, sea-captains and sailing-masters live, and on one corner is an ancient house with windows opening door-fashion upon a deep veranda, that was used as a custom office in Mexican times.

I have a very good friend who is a sailing-master aboard the *Mary Baker*, a full-rigged wheat ship, a Cape Horner, and the most beautiful thing I ever remember to have seen. Occasionally I am invited to make a voyage with him as supercargo, an invitation which you may be sure I accept. Such an invitation came to me one day some four or five years ago, and I made the trip with him to Calcutta and return.

The day before the *Mary Baker* cast off I had been aboard (she was lying in the stream off Meigg's wharf) attending to the stowing of my baggage and the appointment of my stateroom. The yawl put me ashore at three in the afternoon, and I started home via the

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park I have been speaking about. On my way across the park I stopped in front of that fool Geodetic stone, wondering what it might be. And while I stood there puzzling about it, a nurse-maid came up and spoke to me.

The story of "The House With the Blinds" begins here.

The nurse-maid was most dreadfully drunk, her bonnet was awry, her face red and swollen, and one eye was blackened. She was not at all pleasant. In the baby carriage, which she dragged behind her, an overgrown infant yelled like a sabbath of witches.

"Look here," says she; "you're a gemmleman, and I wantcher sh'd help me outen a fix. I'm in a fix, s'wat I am—a damn bad fix."

I got that fool stone between myself and this object, and listened to it pouring out an incoherent tirade against some man who had done it dirt, b'Gawd, and with whom it was incumbent I should fight, and she was in a fix, s'what she was, and could I, who was evidently a perfick gemmleman, oblige her with four bits? All this while the baby yelled till my ears sang again. Well, I gave her four bits to get rid of her, but she stuck to me yet the closer, and confided to me that she lived in that house over yonder, she did—the house with the blinds, and was nurse-maid there, so she was, b'Gawd. But at last I got away and fled in the direction of Stockton Street. As I was going along, however, I reflected that the shrieking infant was somebody's child, and no doubt popular in the house with the blinds. The parents ought to know that its nurse got drunk and into fixes. It was a duty—a dirty duty—for me to inform upon her.

Much as I loathed to do so I turned toward the house with the blinds. It stood hard by the Russian Church, a huge white-painted affair, all the windows

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closely shuttered and a bit of stained glass in the front door—quite the most pretentious house in the row. I had got directly opposite, and was about to cross the street when, lo! around the corner, marching rapidly, and with blue coats flapping, buttons and buckles flashing, came a squad of three, seven, nine—ten policemen. They marched straight upon the house with the blinds.

I am not brilliant nor adventurous, but I have been told that I am good, and I do strive to be respectable, and pay my taxes and pew rent. As a corollary to this, I loathed with a loathing unutterable to be involved in a mess of any kind. The squad of policemen were about to enter the house with the blinds, and not for worlds would I have been found by them upon its steps. The nurse-girl might heave that shrieking infant over the cliff of Telegraph Hill, it were all one with me. So I shrank back upon the sidewalk and watched what followed.

Fifty yards from the house the squad broke into a run, swarmed upon the front steps, and in a moment were thundering upon the front door till the stained glass leaped in its leads and shivered down upon their helmets. And then, just at this point, occurred an incident which, though it had no bearing upon or connection with this yarn, is quite queer enough to be set down. The shutters of one of the top-story windows opened slowly, like the gills of a breathing fish, the sash raised some six inches with a reluctant wail, and a hand groped forth into the open air. On the sill of the window was lying a gilded Indian-club, and while I watched, wondering, the hand closed upon it, drew it under the sash, the window dropped guillotine-fashion, and the shutters clapped to like the shutters of a cuckoo clock. Why was the Indian-club lying on the sill? Why, in Heaven's name, was it gilded? Why did the owner of

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that mysterious groping hand seize upon it at the first intimation of danger? I don't know—I never will. But I do know that the thing was eldritch and uncanny, ghostly even, in the glare of that cheerless afternoon's sun, in that barren park, with the trade winds thrashing up from the seaward streets.

Suddenly the door crashed in. The policemen vanished inside the house. Everything fell silent again. I waited for perhaps fifty seconds—waited, watching, and listening, ready for anything that might happen, expecting I knew not what—everything.

Not more than five minutes had elapsed when the policemen began to reappear. They came slowly, and well they might, for they carried with them the inert bodies of six gentlemen. When I say carried I mean it in its most literal sense, for never in all my life have I seen six gentlemen so completely, so thoroughly, so hopelessly and helplessly intoxicated. Well dressed they were, too, one of them even in full dress. Salvos of artillery could not have awakened that drunken half dozen, and I doubt if any one of them could even have been racked into consciousness.

Three hacks appeared (note that the patrol-wagon was conspicuously absent), the six were loaded upon the cushions, the word was given, and one by one the hacks rattled down Stockton Street and disappeared in the direction of the city. The captain of the squad remained behind for a few moments, locked the outside doors in the deserted shuttered house, descended the steps, and went his way across the park, softly whistling a quickstep. In time he, too, vanished. The park, the rows of houses, the windflogged streets, resumed their normal quiet. The incident was closed.

Or was it closed? Judge you now. Next day I was down upon the wharves, gripsack in hand, capped and clothed for a long sea voyage. The *Mary Baker's* boat

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was not yet come ashore, but the beauty lay out there in the stream, flirting with a bustling tug that circled about her, coughing uneasily at intervals. Idle sailors, 'longshoremen, and stevedores sat upon the stringpiece of the wharf, chewing slivers and spitting reflectively into the water. Across the intervening stretch of bay came the noises from the *Mary Baker's* decks—noises that were small and distinct, as if heard through a telephone, the rattle of blocks, the straining of a windlass, the bos'n's whistle, and once the noise of sawing. A white cruiser sat solidly in the waves over by Alcatraz, and while I took note of her the flag was suddenly broken out and I heard the strains of the ship's band. The morning was fine. Tamalpais climbed out of the water like a rousing lion. In a few hours we would be off on a voyage to the underside of the earth. There was a note of gayety in the nimble air, and one felt that the world was young, after all, and that it was good to be young with her.

A bum-boat woman came down the wharf, corpulent and round, with a roll in her walk that shook first one fat cheek and then the other. She was peddling trinkets amongst the wharf-loungers—pocket combs, little round mirrors, shoestrings, and collar-buttons. She knew them all, or at least was known to all of them, and in a few moments she was retailing to them the latest news of the town. Soon I caught a name or two, and on the instant was at some pains to listen. The bum-boat woman was telling the story of the house with the blinds:

"Sax of um, an' nobs ivry wan. But that bad wid bug-juice! Whoo! Niver have Oi seen the bate! An' divil a wan as can remimber owt for two days by. Bory-eyed they were; struck dumb an' deef an' dead wid whiskey and bubble-wather. Not a manjack av um can tell the tale, but wan av um used his knife cruel

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bad. Now which wan wás it? Howse the coort to find out?"

It appeared that the house with the blinds was, or had been, a gambling house, and what I had seen had been a raid. Then the rest of the story came out, and the mysteries began to thicken. That same evening, after the arrest of the six inebrates, the house had been searched. The police had found evidences of a drunken debauch of a monumental character. But they had found more. In a closet under the stairs the dead body of a man, a well-dressed fellow—beyond a doubt one of the party—knifed to death by dreadful slashes in his loins and at the base of his spine in true evil hand-over-back fashion.

Now this is the mystery of the house with the blinds.

Beyond all doubt, one of the six drunken men had done the murder. Which one? How to find out? So completely were they drunk that not a single one of them could recall anything of the previous twelve hours. They had come out there with their friend the day before. They woke from their orgy to learn that one of them had worried him to his death by means of a short palm-broad dagger taken from a trophy of Persian arms that hung over a divan.

Whose hand had done it? Which one of them was the murderer? I could fancy them—I think I can see them now—sitting there in their cells, each man apart, withdrawn from his fellow-reveller, and each looking furtively into his fellow's face, asking himself, "Was it you? Was it you? or was it I? Which of us, in God's name, has done this thing?"

Well, it was never known. When I came back to San Francisco a year or so later I asked about the affair of the house with the blinds, and found that it had been shelved with the other mysterious crimes. The six men had actually been "discharged for the want of evidence."

THE HOUSE WITH THE BLINDS

But for a long time the thing harassed me. More than once since I have gone to that windy park, with its quivering flagstaff and Geodetic monument, and, sitting on a bench opposite the house, asked myself again and again the bootless questions. Why had the drunken nurse-maid mentioned the house to me in the first place? And why at that particular time? Why had she lied to me in telling me that she lived there? Why was that gilded Indian-club on the sill of the upper window? And whose—here's a point—whose was the hand that drew it inside the house? And then, of course, last of all, the ever-recurrent question, which one of those six inebrates should have stood upon the drop and worn the cap—which one of the company had knifed his friend and bundled him into that closet under the stairs? Had he done it during the night of the orgy, or before it? Was his friend drunk at the time, or sober? I never could answer these questions, and I suppose I shall never know the secret of “The House With the Blinds.”

A Greek family lives there now, and rent the upper story to a man who blows the organ in the Russian Church, and to two Japanese, who have a photograph gallery on Stockton Street. I wonder to what use they have put the little closet under the stairs?

LITTLE DRAMAS OF THE CURB-STONE

THE first Little Drama had for backing the red brick wall of the clinic at the Medical Hospital, and the calcium light was the feeble glimmer of a new-lighted street lamp, though it was yet early in the evening and quite light. There were occasional sudden explosions of a northeast wind at the street corners, and at long intervals an empty cable-car trundled heavily past with a strident whirring of jostled glass windows. Nobody was in sight—the street was deserted. There was the pale red wall of the clinic, severe as that of a prison, the livid grey of the cement sidewalk, and above the faint greenish blue of a windy sky. A door in the wall of the hospital opened, and a woman and a young boy came out. They were dressed darkly, and at once their two black figures detached themselves violently against the pale blue of the background. They made the picture. All the faint tones of the wall and the sky and the grey-brown sidewalk focused immediately upon them. They came across the street to the corner upon which I stood, and the woman asked a direction. She was an old woman, and poorly dressed. The boy, I could see, was her son. Him I took notice of, for she led him to the steps of the nearest house and made him sit down upon the lowest one. She guided all his movements, and he seemed to be a mere figure of wax in her hands. She stood over him, looking at him critically, and muttering to herself. Then she turned to me, and her muttering rose to a shrill, articulate plaint:

“Ah, these fool doctors—these dirty beasts of medi-

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cal students! They impose upon us because we're poor and rob us and tell us lies."

Upon this I asked her what her grievance was, but she would not answer definitely, putting her chin in the air and nodding with half-shut eyes, as if she could say a lot about that if she chose.

"Your son is sick?" said I.

"Yes—or no—not sick; but he's blind, and—and he's blind and he's an idiot—born that way—blind and idiot."

Blind and an idiot! Blind and an idiot! Will you think of that for a moment, you with your full stomachs, you with your brains, you with your two sound eyes. Born blind and idiotic! Do you fancy the horror of that thing? Perhaps you cannot, nor perhaps could I myself have conceived of what it meant to be blind and an idiot had I not seen that woman's son in front of the clinic, in the empty, windy street, where nothing stirred, and where there was nothing green. I looked at him as he sat there, tall, narrow, misshapen. His ready-made suit, seldom worn, but put on that day because of the weekly visit to the clinic, hung in stupid wrinkles and folds upon him. His cheap felt hat, clapped upon his head by his mother with as little unconcern as an extinguisher upon a candle, was wrong end foremost, so that the bow of the band came upon the right-hand side. His hands were huge and white, and lay open and palm upward at his side, the fingers inertly lax, like those of a discarded glove, and his face—

When I looked at the face of him I know not what insane desire, born of an unconquerable disgust, came up in me to rush upon him and club him down to the pavement with my stick and batter in that face—that face of a blind idiot—and blot it out from the sight of the sun for good and all. It was impossible to feel pity for the wretch. I hated him because he was blind and

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an idiot. His eyes were filmy, like those of a fish, and he never blinked them. His mouth hung open.

Blind and an idiot, absolute stagnation, life as unconscious as that of the jelly-fish, an excrescence, a parasitic fungus in the form of a man, a creature far below the brute. The last horror of the business was that he never moved; he sat there just as his mother had placed him, his motionless, filmy eyes fixed, his jaw dropped, his hands open at his sides, his hat on wrong side foremost. He would sit like that, I knew, for hours—for days, perhaps—would, if left to himself, die of starvation, without raising a finger. What was going on inside of that misshapen head—behind those fixed eyes?

I had remembered the case by now. One of the students had told me of it. His mother brought him to the clinic occasionally, so that the lecturer might experiment upon his brain, stimulating it with electricity. "Heredity," the student had commented, "father a degenerate, exhausted race, drank himself into a sanitarium."

While I was thinking all this the mother of the boy had gone on talking, her thin voice vibrant with complaining and vituperation. But indeed I could bear with it no longer, and went away. I left them behind me in the deserted, darkening street, the querulous, nagging woman and her blind, idiotic boy, and the last impression I have of the scene was her shrill voice ringing after me the oft-repeated words:

"Ah, the dirty beasts of doctors—they robs us and impose on us and tell us lies because we're poor!"



The second Little Drama was wrought out for me the next day. I was sitting in the bay window of the club watching the world go by, when my eye was

caught by a little group on the curbstone directly opposite. An old woman, meanly dressed, and two little children, both girls, the elder about ten, the younger, say, six or seven. They had been coming slowly along, and the old woman had been leading the younger child by the hand. Just as they came opposite to where I was sitting the younger child lurched away from the woman once or twice, dragging limply at her hand, then its knees wobbled and bent and the next moment it had collapsed upon the pavement. Some children will do this from sheer perversity and with intent to be carried. But it was not perversity on this child's part. The poor old woman hauled the little girl up to her feet, but she collapsed again at once after a couple of steps and sat helplessly down upon the sidewalk, staring vaguely about, her thumb in her mouth. There was something wrong with the little child—one could see that at half a glance. Some complaint, some disease of the muscles, some weakness of the joints, that smote upon her like this at inopportune moments. Again and again her old mother, with very painful exertion—she was old and weak herself—raised her to her feet, only that she might sink in a heap before she had moved a yard. The old woman's bonnet fell off—a wretched, battered black bonnet, and the other little girl picked it up and held it while she looked on at her mother's efforts with an indifference that could only have been born of familiarity. Twice the old woman tried to carry the little girl, but her strength was not equal to it; indeed, the effort of raising the heavy child to its feet was exhausting her. She looked helplessly at the street cars as they passed, but you could see she had not enough money to pay even three fares. Once more she set her little girl upon her feet, and helped her forward half a dozen steps. And so, little by little, with many pauses for rest and breath, the little group went down

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the street and passed out of view, the little child staggering and falling as if from drunkenness, her sister looking on gravely, holding the mother's battered bonnet, and the mother herself, patient, half-exhausted, her grey hair blowing about her face, labouring on step by step, trying to appear indifferent to the crowd that passed by on either side, trying bravely to make light of the whole matter until she should reach home. As I watched them I thought of this woman's husband, the father of this paralytic little girl, and somehow it was brought to me that none of them would ever see him again, but that he was alive for all that.

* * * * *

The third Little Drama was lively, and there was action in it, and speech, and a curious, baffling mystery. On a corner near a certain bank in this city there is affixed to the lamp-post a call-box that the police use to ring up for the patrol-wagon. When an arrest is made in the neighbourhood the offender is brought here, the wagon called for, and he is conveyed to the City Prison. On the afternoon of the day of the second Little Drama, as I came near to this corner, I was aware of a crowd gathered about the lamp-post that held the call-box, and between the people's heads and over their shoulders I could see the blue helmets of a couple of officers. I stopped and pushed up into the inner circle of the crowd. The two officers had in custody a young fellow of some eighteen or nineteen years. And I was surprised to find that he was as well dressed and as fine looking a lad as one would wish to see. I did not know what the charge was, I don't know it now—but the boy did not seem capable of any great meanness. As I got into the midst of the crowd, and while I was noting what was going forward, it struck me that the people about me were unusually silent—silent as people

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are who are interested and unusually observant. Then I saw why. The young fellow's mother was there, and the Little Drama was enacting itself between her, her son, and the officers who had him in charge. One of these latter had the key to the call-box in his hand. He had not yet rung for the wagon. An altercation was going on between the mother and the son—she entreating him to come home, he steadily refusing.

"It's up to you," said one of the officers, at length; "if you don't go home with your mother, I'll call the wagon."

"No!"

"Jimmy!" said the woman, and then, coming close to him, she spoke to him in a low voice and with an earnestness, an intensity, that it hurt one to see.

"No!"

"For the last time, will you come?"

"No! No! No!"

The officer faced about and put the key into the box, but the woman caught at his wrist and drew it away. It was a veritable situation. It should have occurred behind footlights and in the midst of painted flats and flies, but instead the city thundered about it, drays and cars went up and down in the street, and the people on the opposite walk passed with but an instant's glance. The crowd was as still as an audience, watching what next would happen. The crisis of the Little Drama had arrived.

"For the last time, will you come with me?"

"No!"

She let fall her hand then and turned and went away, crying into her handkerchief. The officer unlocked and opened the box, set the indicator and opened the switch. A few moments later, as I went on up the street, I met the patrol-wagon coming up on a gallop.

What was the trouble here? Why had that young

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fellow preferred going to prison rather than home with his mother? What was behind it all I shall never know. It was a mystery—a little eddy in the tide of the city's life, come and gone in an instant, yet reaching down to the very depths of those things that are not meant to be seen.

And as I went along I wondered where was the father of that young fellow who was to spend his first night in jail, and the father of the little paralytic girl, and the father of the blind idiot, and it seemed to me that the chief actors in these three Little Dramas of the Curbstone had been somehow left out of the programme.

SHORTY STACK, PUGILIST

OVER at the "Big Dipper" mine a chuck-tender named Kelly had been in error as regards a box of dynamite sticks, and Iowa Hill had elected to give an "entertainment" for the benefit of his family.

The programme, as announced upon the posters that were stuck up in the Post Office and on the door of the Odd Fellows' Hall, was quite an affair. The Iowa Hill orchestra would perform, the livery-stable keeper would play the overture to "William Tell" upon his harmonica, and the town doctor would read a paper on "Tuberculosis in Cattle." The evening was to close with a "grand ball."

Then it was discovered that a professional pugilist from the "Bay" was over in Forest Hill, and someone suggested that a match could be made between him and Shorty Stack "to enliven the entertainment." Shorty Stack was a bedrock cleaner at the "Big Dipper," and handy with his fists. It was his boast that no man of his weight (Shorty fought at a hundred and forty), no man of his weight in Placer County could stand up to him for ten rounds, and Shorty had always made good this boast. Shorty knew two punches, and no more—a short-arm jab under the ribs with his right, and a left upper-cut on the point of the chin.

The pugilist's name was McCleaverty. He was an out-and-out dub—one of the kind who appear in four-round exhibition bouts to keep the audience amused while the "event of the evening" is preparing—but he had had ring experience, and his name had been in the sporting paragraphs of the San Francisco papers.

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The dub was a welter-weight and a professional, but he accepted the challenge of Shorty Stack's backers and covered their bet of fifty dollars that he could not "stop" Shorty in four rounds.

And so it came about that extra posters were affixed to the door of the Odd Fellows' Hall and the walls of the Post Office to the effect that Shorty Stack, the champion of Placer County, and Buck McCleaverty, the Pride of Colusa, would appear in a genteel boxing exhibition at the entertainment given for the benefit, etc., etc.

Shorty had two weeks in which to train. The nature of his work in the mine had kept his muscles hard enough, so his training was largely a matter of dieting and boxing an imaginary foe with a rock in each fist. He was so vigorous in his exercise and in the matter of what he ate and drank that the day before the entertainment he had got himself down to a razor-edge, and was in a fair way of going fine. When a man gets into too good condition, the least little slip will spoil him. Shorty knew this well enough, and told himself in consequence that he must be very careful.

The night before the entertainment Shorty went to call on Miss Starbird. Miss Starbird was one of the cooks at the mine. She was a very pretty girl, just turned twenty, and lived with her folks in a cabin near the superintendent's office, on the road from the mine to Iowa Hill. Her father was a shift boss in the mine, and her mother did the washing for the "office." Shorty was recognized by the mine as her "young man." She was going to the entertainment with her people, and promised Shorty the first "walk-around" in the "Grand Ball" that was to follow immediately after the Genteel Glove Contest.

Shorty came into the Starbird cabin on that particular night, his hair neatly plastered in a beautiful curve

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over his left temple, and his pants outside of his boots as a mark of esteem. He wore no collar, but he had encased himself in a boiled shirt, which could mean nothing else but mute and passionate love, and moreover, as a crowning tribute, he refrained from spitting.

"How do you feel, Shorty?" asked Miss Starbird.

Shorty had always sedulously read the interviews with pugilists that appeared in the San Francisco papers immediately before their fights and knew how to answer.

"I feel fit to fight the fight of my life," he alliterated proudly. "I've trained faithfully and I mean to win."

"It ain't a regular prize fight, is it, Shorty?" she enquired. "Pa said he wouldn't take Ma an' me if it was. All the women folk in the camp are going, an' I never heard of women at a fight, it ain't genteel."

"Well, I d'n know," answered Shorty, swallowing his saliva. "The committee that got the programme up called it a genteel boxing exhibition so's to get the women folks to stay. I call it a four-round go with a decision."

"My, itull be exciting!" exclaimed Miss Starbird. "I ain't never seen anything like it. Oh, Shorty, d'ye think you'll win?"

"I don't *think* nothun about it. I *know* I will," returned Shorty defiantly. "If I once get in my left upper cut on him, *huh!*" and he snorted magnificently.

Shorty stayed and talked to Miss Starbird until ten o'clock, then he rose to go.

"I gotta get to bed," he said. "I'm in training, you see."

"Oh, wait a minute," said Miss Starbird, "I been making some potato salad for the private dining of the office, you better have some; it's the best I ever made."

"No, no," said Shorty stoutly, "I don't want any."

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"Hoh," sniffed Miss Starbird airily, "you don't need to have any."

"Well, don't you see," said Shorty, "I'm in training. I don't dare eat any of that kinda stuff."

"Stuff!" exclaimed Miss Starbird, her chin in the air. "No one *else* ever called my cooking stuff."

"Well, don't you see, don't you see?"

"No, I don't see. I guess you must be 'fraid of getting whipped if you're so 'fraid of a little salad."

"What!" exclaimed Shorty indignantly. "Why, I could come into the ring from a jag and whip him; 'fraid! *Who's* afraid? I'll show you if I'm afraid. Let's have your potato salad, an' some beer, too. Huh! *I'll* show you if I'm afraid."

But Miss Starbird would not immediately consent to be appeased.

"No, you called it stuff," she said, "an' the superintendent said I was the best cook in Placer County."

But at last, as a great favour to Shorty, she relented and brought the potato salad from the kitchen and two bottles of beer.

When the town doctor had finished his paper on "Tuberculosis in Cattle," the chairman of the entertainment committee ducked under the ropes of the ring and announced that: "The next would be the event of the evening and would the gentlemen please stop smoking." He went on to explain that the ladies present might remain without fear and without reproach as the participants in the contest would appear in gymnasium tights, and would box with gloves and not with bare knuckles.

"Well, don't they always fight with gloves?" called a voice from the rear of the house. But the chairman ignored the interruption.

The "entertainment" was held in the Odd Fellows' Hall. Shorty's seconds prepared him for the fight in a

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back room of the saloon, on the other side of the street, and toward ten o'clock one of the committeemen came running in to say:

"What's the matter? Hurry up, you fellows, McCleaverty's in the ring already, and the crowd's beginning to stamp."

Shorty rose and slipped into an overcoat.

"All ready," he said.

"Now mind, Shorty," said Billy Hicks, as he gathered up the sponges, fans, and towels, "don't mix things with him, you don't have to knock him out, all you want's the decision."

Next, Shorty was aware that he was sitting in a corner of the ring with his back against the ropes, and that diagonally opposite was a huge red man with a shaven head. There was a noisy, murmuring crowd somewhere below him, and there was a glare of kerosene lights over his head.

"Buck McCleaverty, the Pride of Colusa," announced the master of ceremonies, standing in the middle of the ring, one hand under the dub's elbow. There was a ripple of applause. Then the master of ceremonies came over to Shorty's corner, and, taking him by the arm, conducted him into the middle of the ring.

"Shorty Stack, the Champion of Placer County." The house roared; Shorty ducked and grinned and returned to his corner. He was nervous, excited. He had not imagined it would be exactly like this. There was a strangeness about it all; an unfamiliarity that made him uneasy.

"Take it slow," said Billy Hicks, kneading the gloves, so as to work the padding away from the knuckles. The gloves were laced on Shorty's hands.

"Up you go," said Billy Hicks, again. "No, not the fight yet, shake hands first. Don't get rattled."

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Then ensued a vague interval, that seemed to Shorty interminable. He had a notion that he shook hands with McCleaverty, and that someone asked him if he would agree to hit with one arm free in the breakaway. He remembered a glare of lights, a dim vision of rows of waiting faces, a great murmuring noise, and he had a momentary glimpse of someone he believed to be the referee, a young man in shirtsleeves and turned-up trousers. Then everybody seemed to be getting out of the ring and away from him, even Billy Hicks left him after saying something he did not understand. Only the referee, McCleaverty, and himself were left inside the ropes.

"Time!"

Somebody, that seemed to Shorty strangely like himself, stepped briskly out into the middle of the ring, his left arm before him, his right fist clinched over his breast. The crowd, the glaring lights, the murmuring noise, all faded away. There only remained the creaking of rubber soles over the resin of the boards of the ring and the sight of McCleaverty's shifting, twinkling eyes and his round, close-cropped head.

"Break!"

The referee stepped between the two men and Shorty realized that the two had clinched, and that his right forearm had been across McCleaverty's throat, his left clasping him about the shoulders.

What! Were they fighting already? This was the first round, of course, somebody was shouting.

"That's the stuff, Shorty."

All at once Shorty saw the flash of a red-muscled arm, he threw forward his shoulder ducking his head behind it, the arm slid over the raised shoulder and a bare and unprotected flank turned toward him.

"Now," thought Shorty. His arm shortened and leaped forward. There was a sudden impact. The

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shock of it jarred Shorty himself, and he heard McCleaverty grunt. There came a roar from the house.

"Give it to him, Shorty."

Shorty pushed his man from him, the heel of his glove upon his face. He was no longer nervous. The lights didn't bother him.

"I'll knock him out yet," he muttered to himself.

They fiddled and feinted about the ring, watching each other's eyes. Shorty held his right ready. He told himself he would jab McCleaverty again on the same spot when next he gave him an opening.

"Break!"

They must have clinched again, but Shorty was not conscious of it. A sharp pain in his upper lip made him angry. His right shot forward again, struck home, and while the crowd roared and the lights began to swim again, he knew that he was rushing McCleaverty back, back, back, his arms shooting out and in like piston rods, now for an upper cut with his left on the—

"Time!"

Billy Hicks was talking excitedly. The crowd still roared. His lips pained. Someone was spouting water over him, one of his seconds worked the fans like a windmill. He wondered what Miss Starbird thought of him now.

"Time!"

He barely had a chance to duck, almost double, while McCleaverty's right swished over his head. The dub was swinging for a knockout already. The round would be hot and fast.

"Stay with um, Shorty."

"That's the stuff, Shorty."

He must be setting the pace, the house plainly told him that. He stepped in again and cut loose with both fists.

"Break!"

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Shorty had not clinched. Was it possible that McCleaverty was clinching "to avoid punishment?" Shorty tried again, stepping in close, his right arm crooked and ready.

"Break!"

The dub was clinching. There could be no doubt of that. Shorty gathered himself together and rushed in, upper-cutting viciously; he felt McCleaverty giving way before him.

"He's got um going."

There was exhilaration in the shout. Shorty swung right and left, his fist struck something that hurt him. Sure, he thought, that must have been a good one. He recovered, throwing out his left before him. Where was the dub? not down there on one knee in a corner of the ring? The house was a pandemonium, near at hand someone was counting, "one—two—three—four—"

Billy Hicks shouted, "Come back to your corner. When he's up go right in to finish him. He ain't knocked out yet. He's just taking his full time. Swing for his chin again, you got him going. If you can put him out, Shorty, we'll take you to San Francisco."

"Seven—eight—nine—"

McCleaverty was up again. Shorty rushed in. Something caught him a fearful jar in the pit of the stomach. He was sick in an instant, racked with nausea. The lights began to dance.

"Time!"

There was water on his face and body again, deliciously cool. The fan windmills swung round and round. "What's the matter, what's the matter?" Billy Hicks was asking anxiously.

Something was wrong. There was a lead-like weight in Shorty's stomach, a taste of potato salad came to his mouth, he was sick almost to vomiting.

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"He caught you a hard one in the wind just before the gong, did he?" said Billy Hicks. "There's fight in him yet. He's got a straight-arm body blow you want to look out for. Don't let up on him. Keep——"

"*Time!*"

Shorty came up bravely. In his stomach there was a pain that made it torture to stand erect. Nevertheless, he rushed, lashing out right and left. He was dizzy; before he knew it he was beating the air. Suddenly his chin jolted backward, and the lights began to spin; he was tiring rapidly, too, and with every second his arms grew heavier and heavier and his knees began to tremble more and more. McCleaverty gave him no rest. Shorty tried to clinch, but the dub sidestepped, and came in twice with a hard right and left over the heart. Shorty's gloves seemed made of iron; he found time to mutter, "If I only hadn't eaten that stuff last night."

What with the nausea and the pain, he was hard put to it to keep from groaning. It was the dub who was rushing now; Shorty felt he could not support the weight of his own arms another instant. What was that on his face that was warm and tickled? He knew that he had just strength enough left for one more good blow; if he could only upper-cut squarely on McCleaverty's chin it might suffice.

"*Break!*"

The referee thrust himself between them, but instantly McCleaverty closed again. Would the round never end? The dub swung again, missed, and Shorty saw his chance; he stepped in, upper-cutting with all the strength he could summon up. The lights swam again, and the roar of the crowd dwindled to a couple of voices. He smelt whisky.

"Gimme that sponge." It was Billy Hicks' voice. "He'll do all right now."

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Shorty suddenly realized that he was lying on his back. In another second he would be counted out. He raised himself, but his hands touched a bed quilt and not the resined floor of the ring. He looked around him and saw that he was in the back room of the saloon where he had dressed. The fight was over.

"Did I win?" he asked, getting on his feet.

"Win!" exclaimed Billy Hicks. "You were knocked out. He put you out after you had him beaten. Oh, you're a peach of a fighter, you are!"

* * * * *

Half an hour later, when he had dressed, Shorty went over to the Hall. His lip was badly swollen and his chin had a funny shape, but otherwise he was fairly presentable. The Iowa Hill orchestra had just struck into the march for the walk around. He pushed through the crowd of men around the door looking for Miss Starbird. Just after he had passed he heard a remark and the laugh that followed it:

"Quitter, oh, what a quitter!"

Shorty turned fiercely about and would have answered, but just at that moment he caught sight of Miss Starbird. She had just joined the promenade or the walk around with some other man. He went up to her:

"Didn't you promise to have this walk around with me?" he said aggrievedly.

"Well, did you think I was going to wait all night for you?" returned Miss Starbird.

As she turned from him and joined the march Shorty's eye fell upon her partner.

It was McCleaverty.

THE STRANGEST THING

THE best days in the voyage from the Cape to Southampton are those that come immediately before and immediately after that upon which you cross the line, when the ship is as steady as a billiard table, and the ocean is as smooth and shiny and coloured as the mosaic floor of a basilica church, when the deck is covered with awning from stem to stern, and the resin bubbles out of the masts, and the thermometer in the companion-way at the entrance to the dining-saloon climbs higher and higher with every turn of the screw. Of course all the men people aboard must sleep on deck these nights. There is a pleasure in this that you will find nowhere else. At six your steward wakes you up with your morning cup of coffee, and you sit cross-legged in your pajamas on the skylight and drink your coffee and smoke your cigarettes and watch the sun shooting up over the rim of that polished basilica floor, and take pleasure in the mere fact of your existence, and talk and talk and tell stories until it's time for bath and breakfast.

We came back from the Cape in *The Moor*, with a very abbreviated cabin list. Only three of the smaller tables in the saloon were occupied, and those mostly by men—diamond-brokers from Kimberley, gold-brokers from the Rand, the manager of a war correspondent on a lecture tour, cut short by the Ashanti war, an English captain of twenty-two, who had been with Jameson at Krugersdorp and somehow managed to escape, an Australian reporter named Miller, and two or three others of a less distinct personality.

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Miller told the story that follows early one morning, sitting on the Bull board, tailor-fashion, and smoking pipefuls of straight perique, black as a nigger's wool. We were grouped around him on the deck in pajamas and bathrobes. It was half after six, the thermometer was at 70 degrees, *The Moor* cut the still water with a soothing rumble of her screw, and at intervals flushed whole schools of flying fish. Somehow the talk had drifted to the inexplicable things that we had seen, and we had been piecing out our experiences with some really beautiful lies. Captain Thatcher, the Krugersdorp chap, held that the failure of the Jameson Raid was the most inexplicable thing he had ever experienced, but none of the rest of us could think of anything we had seen or heard of that did not have some stealthy, shadowy sort of explanation sneaking after it and hunting it down.

"Well, I saw something a bit thick once," observed Miller, pushing down the tobacco in his pipe bowl with the tip of a calloused finger, and in the abrupt silence that followed we heard the noise of dishes from the direction of the galley.

"It was in Johannesburg three years back, when I was down on me luck. I had been rooked properly by a Welsh gaming chap who was no end of a bounder, and three quid was all that stood between me and—well," he broke in, suddenly, "I had three quid left. I wore down me feet walking the streets of that bally town looking for anything that would keep me going for a while, and give me a chance to look around and fetch breath, and there was nothing, but I tell ye nothing, and I was fair desperate. One dye, and a filthy wet dye it was, too, I had gone out to the race track, beyond Hospital Hill, where the pony races are run, thinking as might be, I'd find a berth, handling ponies there, but the season was too far gone, and they turned

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me awye. I came back to town by another road—then by the waye that fetches around by the Mahomedan burying-ground. Well, the pauper burying-ground used to be alongside in those dyes, and as I came up, jolly well blown, I tell ye, for I'd but tightened me belt by wye of breakfast, I saw a chap diggin' a gryve. I was in a mind for gryves meself just then, so I pulled up and leaned over the fence and piped him off at his work. Then, like the geeser I'd come to be, I says:

““What are ye doing there, friend?” He looked me over between shovelfuls a bit, and then says:

““Oh, just setting out early violets”; and that shut me up properly.

“Well, I piped him digging that gryve for perhaps five minutes, and then, s’ help me, I asked him for a job. I did—I asked that gryve-digger for a job—I was that low. He leans his back against the side of the gryve and looks me over, then by and by, says he:

““All right, pardner!”

““I’m thinking you’re from the Stypes,” says I.

““Guess yes,” he says, and goes on digging.

“Well, we came to terms after a while. He was to give me two bob a dye for helping him at his work, and I was to have a bunk in his ‘shack,’ as he called it—a box of a house built of four boards, as I might sye, that stood just on the edge of the gryveyard. He was a rum ‘un, was that Yankee chap. Over pipes that night he told me something of himself, and do y’ know, that gryve-digger in the pauper burying-ground in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a Harvard graduate! Strike me straight if I don’t believe he really was. The man was a wreck from strong drink, but that was the one thing he was proud of.

““Yes, sir,” he’d say, over and over again, looking straight ahead of him, ‘Yes, sir, I was a Harvard man once, and pulled at number five in the boat’—the ‘var-

THE STRANGEST THING

sity boat, mind ye; and then he'd go on talking half to himself. 'And now what am I? I'm digging gryves for hire—burying dead people for a living, when I ought to be dead meself. I am dead and buried long ago. It's just the whisky that keeps me alive, Miller,' he would say; 'when I stop that I'm done for.'

"The first morning I came round for work I met him dressed as if to go to town, and carrying a wickered demijohn. 'Miller,' he says, 'I'm going into town to get this filled. You must stop here and be ready to answer any telephone call from the police station.' S' help me if there wasn't a telephone in that beastly shack. 'If a pauper cops off they'll ring you up from town and notify you to have the gryve ready. If I'm awye, you'll have to dig it. Remember, if it's a man, you must dig a six-foot-six hole; if it's a woman, five feet will do, and if it's a kid, three an' half'll be a plenty. S'long.' And off he goes.

"Strike me blind but that was a long dye, that first one. I'd the pauper gryves for view and me own thoughts for company. But along about noon, the Harvard graduate not showing up, I found a diversion. The graduate had started to paint the shack at one time, but had given over after finishing one side, but the paint pot and the brushes were there. I got hold of 'em and mixed a bit o' paint and went the rounds of the gryves. Ye know how it is in a pauper burying-ground—no nymes at all on the headboards—naught but numbers, and half o' them washed awye by the rynes; so I, for a diversion, as I sye, started in to paint all manner o' fancy nymes and epitaphs on the headboards—any nyme that struck me fancy, and then underneath, an appropriate epitaph, and the dytes, of course—I didn't forget the dytes. Ye know, that was the rarest enjoyment I ever had. Ye don't think so? Try it once! Why, Gawd blyme me, there's a chance for

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imagination in it, and genius and art—highest kind of art. For instance now, I'd squat down in front of a blank headboard and think a bit, and the inspiration would come, and I'd write like this, maybe: 'Jno. K. Boggart, of New Zealand. Born Dec. 21, 1870; died June 5, 1890,' and then, underneath, 'He Rests in Peace'; or else, 'Elsie, Youngest Daughter of Mary B. and William H. Terhune; b. May 1, 1880; d. Nov. 25, 1889—Not Lost, but Gone Before'; or agyne, 'Lucas, Lieutenant T. V., Killed in Battle at Wady Halfa, Egypt, August 30, 1889; born London, England, Jan. 3, 1850—He Lies Like a Warrior, Tyking His Rest with His Martial Cloak Around Him'; or something humorous, as 'Bohunkus, J. J.; born Germany, Oct. 3, 1880; died (by request) Cape Town, Sept. 4, 1890'; or one that I remember as my very best effort, that read, 'Willie, Beloved Son of Anna and Gustave Harris; b. April 1, 1878; d. May 5, 1888—He was a Man Before His Mother.' Then I wrote me own nyme, with the epitaph, 'More Sinned Against Than Sinning'; and the Harvard chap's, too. His motto, I remember, was 'He Pulled 5 in His 'Varsity's Boat.'

"Well, I had more sport that afternoon than I've ever had since. Y'know I felt as if I really were acquainted with all those people—with John Boggart, and Lieutenant Lucas, and Bohunkus, and Willie and all. Ah, that was a proper experience. But right in the middle of me work here comes a telephone message from town: 'Body of dead baby found at mouth of city sewer—prepare gryve at once.' Well, I dug that gryve, the first, last, and only gryve I ever hope to dig. It came on to ryne like a water-spout, and oh, but it was jolly tough work. Then about four o'clock, just as I was finishing, the Harvard chap comes home, howling drunk. I see him go into the shack, and pretty soon out he comes, with a hoe in one hand and a table leg

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in the other. Soon as ever he sees me he makes a staggering run at me, swinging the hoe and the table leg and yelling like a Zulu indaba. Just to make everything agreeable and appropriate, I was down in the gryve, and it occurred to me that the situation was too uncommon convenient. I scrambled out and made a run for it, for there was murder in his eye, and for upwards of ten minutes we two played blindman's buff in that gryveyard, me dodging from one headboard to another, and he at me heels, chivying me like a fox and with intent to kill. All at once he trips over a headboard, and goes down and can't get up, and at the same minute here comes the morgue wagon over Hospital Hill.

"Now here comes the queer part of this lamentable history. A trap was following that morgue wagon, a no-end swell trap, with a cob in the shafts that was worth an independent fortune. There was an old gent in the trap and a smart Cape boy driving. The old gent was the heaviest kind of a swell, but I'd never seen him before. The morgue wagon drives into the yard, and I—the Harvard chap being too far gone—points out the gryve. The driver of the morgue wagon chuck's out the coffin, a bit of a three-foot box, and drives back to town. Then up comes the trap, and the old gent gets down—dressed up to the nines he was, in that heart-breaking ryne—and says he, 'My man, I would like to have that coffin opened.' By this time the Harvard chap had pulled himself together. He staggered up to the old gent and says, 'No, can't op'n no coffin, 'tsagainst all relugations—all regalutions, can't permit no coffin to be opp'n.' I wish you would have seen the old gent. Excited! The man was shaking like a flagstaff in a gyle, talked thick and stammered, he was so phased. Gawd strike me, what a scene! I can see it now—that pauper burying-ground wye down there in South Africa—

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no trees, all open and bleak. The pelting ryne, the open gryve and the drunken Harvard chap, and the excited old swell arguing over a baby's coffin.

"Pretty soon the old gent brings up a sovereign and gives it to the Harvard chap.

"'Let her go,' says he then, and with that he gives the top board of the coffin such a kick as started it an inch or more. With that—now listen to what I'm telling—with that the old gent goes down on his knees in the mud and muck, and kneels there waiting and fair gasping with excitement while the Harvard chap wrenches off the top board. Before he had raised it four inches me old gent plunges his hand in quick, gropes there a second and takes out something—something shut in the palm of his hand.

"'That's all,' says he. 'Thank you, my man,' and gives us a quid apiece. We stood there like stuck swine, dotty with the queerness, the horribleness of the thing.

"'That's all,' he says again, with a long breath of relief, as he climbs into his trap with his clothes all foul with mud. 'That's all, thank Gawd.' Then to the Cape boy: 'Drive her home, Jim.' Five minutes later we lost him in the blur of the rain over Hospital Hill."

"But what was it he took out of the baby's coffin?" said half a dozen men in a breath at this point. "What was it? What could it have been?"

"Ah, what was it?" said Miller. "I'll be damned if I know what it was. I never knew, I never will know."

A REVERSION TO TYPE

SCHUSTER was too damned cheeky. He was the floor-walker in a department store on Kearny Street, and I had opportunity to observe his cheek upon each of the few occasions on which I went into that store with—let us say my cousin. A floor-walker should let his communications be “first aisle left,” or “elevator, second floor front,” or “third counter right,” for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil. But Schuster used to come up to—my cousin, and take her gently by the hand and ask her how she did, and if she was to be out of town much that season, and tell her, with mild reproach in his eye, that she had been quite a stranger of late, while I stood in the background mumbling curses not loud but deep.

However, my cousin does not figure in this yarn, nor myself. Paul Schuster is the hero—Paul Schuster, floor-walker in a department store that sold ribbons and lace and corsets and other things, fancy, now! He was hopelessly commonplace, lived with a maiden aunt and a parrot in two rooms, way out in the bleak streets around Lone Mountain. When on duty he wore a long black cutaway coat, a white piqué four-in-hand and blue-grey “pants” that cost four dollars. Besides this he parted his hair on the side and entertained ideas on culture and refinement. His father had been a barber in the Palace Hotel barber shop.

Paul Schuster had never heard anything of a grandfather.

Schuster came to that department store when he was about thirty. Five years passed; then ten—he was

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there yet—forty years old by now. Always in a black cutaway and white tie, always with his hair parted on one side, always with the same damned cheek. A floor-walker, respectable as an English barrister, steady as an eight-day clock, a figure known to every woman in San Francisco. He had lived a floor-walker; as a floor-walker he would die. Such he was at forty. At forty-one he fell. Two days and all was over.

It sometimes happens that a man will live a sober, steady, respectable, commonplace life for forty, fifty, or even sixty years, and then, without the least sign of warning, suddenly go counter to every habit, to every trait of character and every rule of conduct he has been believed to possess. The thing only happens to intensely respectable gentlemen, of domestic tastes and narrow horizons, who are just preparing to become old. Perhaps it is a last revolt of a restrained youth—the final protest of vigorous, heady blood, too long dammed up. This bolting season does not last very long. It comes upon a man between the ages of forty and fifty-five, and while it lasts the man should be watched more closely than a young fellow in his sophomore year at college. The vagaries of a sophomore need not be taken any more seriously than the skittishness of a colt, but when a fifty-year-old bolts, stand clear!

On the second of May—two months and a day after his forty-first birthday—Paul Schuster bolted. It came upon him with the quickness of a cataclysm, like the sudden, abrupt development of latent mania. For a week he had been feeling ill at ease—restless; a vague discomfort hedged him in like an ill-fitting garment; he felt the moving of his blood in his wrists and his temples. A subtle desire to do something, he knew not what, bit and nibbled at his brain like the tooth of a tiny unfamiliar rodent.

On the second of May, at twenty minutes after six,

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Schuster came out of the store at the tail end of the little army of home-bound clerks. He locked the door behind him, according to custom, and stood for a moment on the asphalt, his hands in his pockets, fumbling his month's pay. Then he said to himself, nodding his head resolutely:

"To-night I shall get drunk—as drunk as I possibly can. I shall go to the most disreputable resorts I can find—I shall know the meaning of wine, of street fights, of women, of gaming, of jolly companions, of noisy midnight suppers. I'll do the town, or, by God, the town will do me. Nothing shall stop me, and I will stop at nothing. Here goes!"

Now, if Paul Schuster had only been himself this bolt of his would have brought him to nothing worse than the Police Court, and would have lasted but twenty-four hours at the outside. But Schuster, like all the rest of us, was not merely himself. He was his ancestors as well. In him, as in you and me, were generations—countless generations—of forefathers. Schuster had in him the characteristics of his father, the Palace Hotel barber, but also he had the unknown characteristics of his grandfather, of whom he had never heard, and his great-grandfather, likewise ignored. It is a rather serious matter to thrust yourself under the dominion of unknown, unknowable impulses and passions. This is what Schuster did that night. Getting drunk was an impulse belonging to himself; but who knows what "inherited tendencies," until then dormant, the alcohol unleashed within him? Something like this must have happened to have accounted for what follows.

Schuster went straight to the Palace Hotel bar, where he had cocktails, thence to the Poodle Dog, where he had a French dinner and champagne, thence to the Barbary Coast on upper Kearny Street, and

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drank whisky that rasped his throat like gulps of carpet tacks. Then, realizing that San Francisco was his own principality and its inhabitants his vassals, he hired a carriage and drove to the Cliff House, and poured champagne into the piano in the public parlour. A waiter remonstrated, and Paul Schuster, floor-walker and respectable citizen, bowled him down with a catsup bottle and stamped upon his abdomen. At the beginning of that evening he belonged to that class whom policemen are paid to protect. When he walked out of the Cliff House he was a free-booter seven feet tall, with a chest expansion of fifty inches. He paid the hack-driver a double fare and strode away into the night and plunged into the waste of sand dunes that stretch back from the beach on the other side of the Park.

It never could be found out what happened to Schuster, or what he did, during the next ten hours. We pick him up again in a saloon on the waterfront about noon the next day, with thirty dollars in his pocket and God knows what disorderly notions in his crazed wits. At this time he was sober as far as the alcohol went. It might be supposed that now would have been the time for reflection and repentance and return to home and respectability. Return home! Not much! Schuster had begun to wonder what kind of an ass he had been to have walked the floor of a department store for the last score of years. Something was boiling in his veins. B-r-r-r! Let 'em all stand far from him now.

That day he left San Francisco and rode the blind baggage as far as Colfax on the Overland. He chose Colfax because he saw the name chalked on a freight car at the Oakland mole. At Colfax, within three hours after his arrival, he fought with a restaurant man over the question of a broken saucer, and the same evening was told to leave the town by the sheriff.

Out of Colfax, some twenty-eight miles into the

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mountains, are placer gold mines, having for headquarters a one-street town called Iowa Hill. Schuster went over to the Hill the same day on the stage. The stage got in at night and pulled up in front of the post-office. Schuster went into the post-office, which was also a Wells-Fargo office, a candy store, a drug store, a cigar store, and a lounging-room, and asked about hotels.

Only the postmaster was in at that time, but as Schuster leaned across the counter, talking to him, a young man came in, with a huge spur on his left boot-heel. He and the postmaster nodded, and the young man slid an oblong object about the size of a brick across the counter. The object was wrapped in newspaper and seemed altogether too heavy for anything but metal—metal of the precious kind, for example.

"He?" answered the postmaster to Schuster, when the young man had gone. "He's the superintendent of the Little Bear mine on the other side of the American River, about three miles by the trail."

For the next week Schuster set himself to work to solve the problem of how a man might obtain a shotgun in the vicinity of Iowa Hill without the fact being remembered afterward and the man identified. It seemed good to him after a while to steal the gun from a couple of Chinamen who were washing gravel along the banks of the American River about two miles below the Little Bear. For two days he lay in the tarweed and witch hazel, on the side of the canyon overlooking the cabin, noted the time when both Chinamen were sufficiently far away, and stole the gun, together with a saw and a handful of cartridges loaded with buckshot. Within the next week he sawed off the gun-barrels sufficiently short, experimented once or twice with the buckshot, and found occasion to reconnoitre every step of the trail that led from the Little Bear to Iowa Hill. Also, he found out at the bar of the hotel at the

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Hill that the superintendent of the Little Bear amalgamated and reported the cleanup on Sundays. When he had made sure of this Schuster was seen no more about that little one-street mining town.

"He says it's Sunday," said Paul Schuster to himself, "but that's why it's probably Saturday or Monday. He ain't going to have the town know when he brings the brick over. It might even be Friday. I'll make it a four-night watch."

There is a nasty bit on the trail from the Little Bear to the Hill, steep as a staircase, narrow as a rabbit-run, and overhung with manzanita. The place is trumpet-mouthed in shape, and sound carries far. So, on the second night of his watch, Schuster could at last plainly hear the certain sounds that he had been waiting for—sounds that jarred sharply on the prolonged roll of the Morning Star stamps, a quarter of a mile beyond the canyon. The sounds were those of a horse threshing through the gravel and shallow water of the ford in the river just below. He heard the horse grunt as he took the slope of the nearer bank, and the voice of his rider speaking to him came distinctly to his ears. Then silence for one—two—three minutes, while the stamp mill at the Morning Star purred and rumbled unceasingly and Schuster's heart pumped thickly in his throat. Then a blackness blacker than that of the night heaved suddenly against the grey of the sky, close in upon him, and a pebble clicked beneath a shod hoof.

"Pull up!" Schuster was in the midst of the trail, his cheek caressing the varnished stock.

"Whoa! Steady there! What in hell——"

"Pull up. You know what's wanted. Chuck us that brick."

The superintendent chirped sharply to the horse, spurring with his left heel.

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"Stand clear there, God damn you! I'll ride you down!"

The stock leaped fiercely in Schuster's arm-pit, nearly knocking him down, and, in the light of two parallel flashes, he saw an instantaneous picture—rugged skyline, red-tinted manzanita bushes, the plunging mane and head of a horse, and above it a Face with open mouth and staring eyes, smoke-wreathed and hatless. The empty stirrup thrashed across Schuster's body as the horse scraped by him. The trail was dark in front of him. He could see nothing. But soon he heard a little bubbling noise and a hiccup. Then all fell quiet again.

"I got you, all right!"

Thus Schuster, the ex-floor-walker, whose part hitherto in his little life-drama had been to say, "first aisle left," "elevator, second floor," "first counter right."

Then he went down on his knees, groping at the warm bundle in front of him. But he found no brick. It had never occurred to him that the superintendent might ride over to town for other reasons than merely to ship the week's cleanup. He struck a light and looked more closely—looked at the man he had shot. He could not tell whether it was the superintendent or not, for various reasons, but chiefly because the barrels of the gun had been sawn off, the gun loaded with buckshot, and both barrels fired simultaneously at close range.

Men coming over the trail from the Hill the next morning found the young superintendent, and spread the report of what had befallen him.

* * * * *

When the Prodigal Son became hungry he came to himself. So it was with Schuster. Living on two slices of bacon per day (eaten raw for fear of kindling fires) is what might be called starving under difficulties,

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and within a week Schuster was remembering and longing for floor-walking and respectability. Within a month of his strange disappearance he was back in San Francisco again knocking at the door of his aunt's house on Geary Street. A week later he was taken on again at his old store, in his old position, his unexcused absence being at length, and under protest, condoned by a remembrance of "long and faithful service."

Schuster picked up his old life again precisely where he had left it on the second of May, six weeks previously —picked it up and stayed by it, calmly, steadily, uneventfully. The day before he died he told this story to his maiden aunt, who told it to me, with the remark that it was, of course, an absurd lie. Perhaps it was.

One thing, however, remains to tell. I repeated the absurd lie to a friend of mine who is in the warden's office over at the prison of San Quentin. I mentioned Schuster's name.

"Schuster! Schuster!" he repeated; "why, we had a Schuster over here once—a long time ago, though. An old fellow he was, and a bad egg, too. Commuted for life, though. Son was a barber at the Palace Hotel."

"What was old Schuster up for?" I asked.

"Highway robbery," said my friend.

"BOOM"

SAN DIEGO, in Southern California, is the largest city in the world. If your geographies and guide-books and encyclopædias have told you otherwise, they have lied, or their authors have never seen San Diego. Why, San Diego is nearly twenty-five miles from end to end! Why, San Diego has more miles of sidewalk, more leagues of street railways, more measureless lengths of paved streets, more interminable systems of sewer-piping, than has London or Paris or even—even—even Chicago (and I who say so was born in Chicago, too)! There are statelier houses in San Diego than in any other "of the world's great centres," more spacious avenues, more imposing business blocks, more delicious parks, more overpowering public buildings, the pavements are better laid, the electric lighting is more systematic, the railroad and transportation facilities more accommodating, the climate is better than the Riviera, the days are longer, the nights shorter, the men finer, the women prettier, the theatres more attractive, the restaurants cheaper, the wines more sparkling, "business opportunities" lie in wait for the unfortunate at dark street-corners and fly at his throat till he must fain fight them off. Life is one long, glad fermentation. There is no darkness in San Diego, nor any more night.

Incidentally corner lots are desirable.

All of this must be so, because you may read it in the green and gold prospectus of the San Diego Land and Improvement Company (consolidated), sent free on application—that is, at one time during the boom it was sent free—but to-day the edition is out of print,

and can only be seen in the collection of bibliophiles and wealthy amateurs, and the boom is only an echo now. But when the guests of the big Coronado Hotel over on the island come across to the mainland and course jackrabbits with greyhounds in the country to the north of the town, their horses' hoofs, as they plunge through the sagebrush and tarweed, will sometimes slide and clatter upon a bit of concrete sidewalk, half sunk of its own weight into the sand; or the jack will be started in a low square of bricks, such as is built for frame-house foundations, and which make excellent jumping for the horses. There is a colony of rattlers on the shores of a marsh to the southwest (the maps call it Amethyst Lake) and the little half-breed Indians catch the tarantulas and horned toads that you buy alive in glass jars on the hotel veranda, near the post-office site, and everything is very gay and pleasant and picturesque.

Why I remember it all so well is because I found Steele in this place. You see, Steele was a very good friend of mine though he was Oxon, and I only a man from Chicago. When his wife knew I was coming west she gave me Steele's address, and told me I was to look him up. Since she told me this with much insistence and reiteration and with tears in her voice, I made it a point to be particular. She had not heard from Steele in two years. The address she gave me was "Hon. Ralph Truax-Steele, Elmwood Avenue and One Hundred and Eighty-eighth Street, San Diego, California."

When I arrived at San Diego I found it would be advisable to hire a horse, for 188th Street, instead of waiting for the Elmwood Avenue electric car, and when I asked for directions a red-headed man whose father was Irish and whose mother was Chinese offered to act as guide for twenty dollars. He said, though, he would furnish his own outfit. I demurred and he went

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away. I was told that some eight miles out beyond the range I would find a water-hole, and that if I held to the southwest after leaving this hole, keeping my horse's ears between the double peak of a distant mountain called Little Two Top, I would come after a while to a lamp-post with a tarantula's nest where the lamp should have been. It would be hard to miss this lamp-post, they told me, as the desert was very flat thereabouts, and the lamp-posts could be seen for a radius of ten miles. Also, there might be water there—the horse would smell it out if there was. Also, it was a good place to camp, because of a tiny ledge of shale outcropping there. I was to be particular about this lamp-post, because it stood at the corner of Elmwood Avenue and 188th Street.

When I asked about the Hon. Truax-Steele, Oxon, information was less explicit. They shook their heads. One of them seemed to recollect a “shack” about a mile hitherward of Two Top, a statement that was at once contradicted by someone else. Might have been an old Digger “wicky-up.” Sometimes the Indians camped in the valley on their way to ghost dances and tribal feasts. It wasn't a place for a white man to live, chiefly because the climate offered so many advantages and attractions to horned toads, tarantulas, and rattlesnakes. Then the red-headed Chinese-Irishman came back and said, with an accent that was beyond all words, that a sheep herder had once told him of a loco-man out beyond McIntyre's water-hole, and another man said that, “Yes, that was so; he'd passed flasks with a loco-man out that way once last June, when he was out looking for a strayed pony. In fact, the loco-man lived out there, had a son, too, leastways a kid lived with him.” This seemed encouraging. The Hon. Truax-Steele, Oxon, was accredited with a son—so his wife had said, who should know. So I started out, si-

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multaneously hoping and dreading that the loco-man and the honourable Truax might be one flesh.

I left San Diego at four o'clock A. M. to avoid as much as possible the heat of mid-day, and just at sunset saw what might have been a cactus plant standing out stark and still on the white blur of sage and alkali like an exclamation point on a blank page. It was the lamp-post of the spider's nest that marked the intersection of Elmwood Avenue and 188th Street. And then my horse shied, with his hind legs only, in the way good horses have, and Ralph Truax-Steele rose out of a dried muck-hole under the bit.

I had expected a madman, but his surprise and pleasure at seeing me were perfectly sane. After awhile he said: "Sorry, old boy. It's the hospitality of the Arab I can give you; nothing better. A handful of dates (we call 'em canned prunes out here), the dried flesh of a kid (Californian for jerked beef), and a mouthful of cold water, which the same we will thicken with forty-rod rye; incidentally, coffee, black and unsweet, and tobacco, which at one time I should have requested my undergroom to discontinue."

We went to his "shack" (I observed it to be built of discarded bricks, mortared with 'dobe mud) and I was made acquainted with his boy, Carrington Truax-Steele, fitting for Oxford under tutelage of his father.

We had supper, after which the Hon. Truax, Sr., stood forth under the kindling glory of that desert twilight by that incongruous, reeling lamp-post, booted, bare-headed, and woollen-shirted, and to the low swinging scimitar of the new welded moon declaimed Creon's speech to Oedipus in sonorous Greek. When he was done he exclaimed, abruptly: "Come along, I'll show you 'round."

I looked about that stricken reach of alkali, and followed him, wondering. That evening the Hon. Ralph

"BOOM"

Truax-Steele, Oxon, showed me his real estate and also, unwittingly, the disordered workings of his brain. The rest I guessed and afterwards confirmed.

Steele had gone mad over the real estate "boom" that had struck the town five years previously, when land was worth as many dollars as could cover it, and men and women fought with each other to buy lots around the water-hole called Amethyst Lake. The "boom" had collapsed, and with it Steele's reason, for to him the boom was on the point of recommencing; sane enough on other points, in this direction the man's grip upon himself was gone for good.

"There," he said to me that evening as we crushed our way through the sagebrush, indicating a low roll on the desert surface, "there are my villa sites, here will run a driveway, and yonder where you see the skeleton of that steer I'm thinking of putting up a little rustic stone chapel."

"Ralph, Ralph," I said, "come out of this. Can't you see that the whole business is dead and done for long since? You're going back with me to God's country to-morrow—going back to your wife, you and the boy. She sent me to fetch you."

He stared at me wonderingly.

"Why, it's bound to come within a few days," he said. "Wait till next Wednesday, say, and you won't recognize this place. There'll be a rush here such as there was when Oklahoma was opened. We have everything for us—climate, temperature, water. Harry," he added in my ear, "look around you. You are standing on the site of one of the grandest, stateliest cities of civilization."

That night the boy Carrington and I sat late in consultation while Steele slept. "Nothing but force will do it," said the lad. "I know him well, and I've tried it again and again. It's no use any other way." So force it was.

How we got Steele back to San Diego I may not tell. Carrington is the only other person who knows, and I'm sure he will say nothing. When Steele found himself in the heart of a real city and began to look about him, and take stock of his surroundings, the real collapse came. He is in a sanitarium now somewhere in Illinois, and his wife and son see him on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons from two till five. Steele will never come out of that sanitarium, though he now realizes that his desert city was a myth, a creation of his own distorted wits. He's sound enough on that point, but a strange inversion has taken place. It is now upon all other subjects that he is insane.

THE DIS-ASSOCIATED CHARITIES

THREE used to be a place in feudal Paris called the Court of Miracles, and Mister Victor Hugo has told us all about it. This Court was a quarter of the town where the beggars lived, and it was called "of the miracles," because once across its boundaries the blind saw, the lame walked, and the poor cared not to have the gospel preached unto them.

San Francisco has its Court of Miracles, too. It is a far cry thither, for it lies on the other side of Chinatown and Dagotown, and blocks beyond Luna's restaurant. It is in the valley between Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill, and you must pass through it as you go down to Meigg's wharf where the Government tugs tie up.

One has elected to call it the Court of Miracles, but it is not a court, and the days of miracles are over. It is a row of seven two-story houses, one of them brick. The brick house is over a saloon kept by a Kanaka woman and called "The Eiffel Tower." Here San Francisco's beggars live and have their being. That is, a good many of them.

The doubled-up old man with the white beard and neck-handkerchief who used to play upon a zither and the sympathies of the public on the corner of Sutter Street has moved out, and one can find no trace of him, and Father Elphick, the white-headed vegetarian of Lotta's Fountain, is dead. But plenty of the others are left. The neatly dressed fellow with dark blue spectacles, who sings the *Marseillaise*, accompanying himself upon an infinitesimal hand organ, is here; Mrs. McCleaverty is here, and the old bare-headed man who

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sits on the street corner by the Bohemian Club, after six o'clock in the evening and turns the crank of a soundless organ, has here set up his everlasting rest.

The beggars of the Seven Houses are genuine miseries. Perhaps they have an organization and a president, I don't know. But I do know that Leander and I came very near demoralizing the whole lot of them.

More strictly speaking, it was Leander who did the deed, I merely looked on and laughed, but Leander says that by laughing I lent him my immoral support, and am therefore party to the act.

Leander and I had been dining at the "Red House," which is a wine-shop that Gelett Burgess discovered in an alley not far from the county jail. Leander and I had gone there because we like to sit at its whittled tables and drink its *Vin Ordinaire* (*très ordinaire*) out of tin gill measures; also we like its salad and its thick slices of bread that you eat after you have rubbed them with an onion or a bit of garlic. We always go there in evening dress in order to impress the Proletariat.

On this occasion after we had dined and had come out again into the gas and gaiety of the Mexican quarter we caromed suddenly against Cluness. Cluness is connected with some sort of a charitable institution that has a house somewhere in the "Quarter." He says that he likes to alleviate distress wherever he sees it; and that, after all, the best thing in life is to make some poor fellow happy for a few moments.

Leander and I had nothing better to do that evening so we went around with Cluness, and watched him as he gave a month's rent to an infirm old lady on Stockton Street, a bundle of magazines to a whining old rascal at the top of a nigger tenement, and some good advice to a Chinese girl who didn't want to go to the Presbyterian Mission House.

"That's my motto," says he, as we came away from

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the Chinese girl, "alleviate misery wherever you see it and try and make some poor fellow happy for a few moments."

"Ah, yes," exclaimed this farceur Leander, sanctimoniously, while I stared, "that's the only thing worth while," and he sighed and wagged his head.

Cluness went on to tell us about a deserving case he had—we were going there next—in fact, innocently enough, he described the Seven Houses to us, never suspecting they were the beggar's headquarters. He said there was a poor old paralytic woman lived there, who had developed an appetite for creamed oysters.

"It's the only thing," said Cluness, "that she can keep on her stomach."

"She told you so?" asked Leander.

"Yes, yes."

"Well, she ought to know."

We arrived at the Seven Houses and Cluness paused before the tallest and dirtiest.

"Here's where she lives; I'm going up for a few moments."

"Have a drink first," suggested Leander, fixing his eyes upon the saloon under the brick house.

We three went in and sat down at one of the little round zinc tables—painted to imitate marble—and the Kanaka woman herself brought us our drinks. While we were drinking, one of the beggars came in. He was an Indian, totally blind, and in the daytime played a mouth-organ on Grant Avenue near a fashionable department store.

"Tut, tut," said Cluness, "poor fellow, blind, you see, what a pity. I'll give him a quarter."

"No, let me," exclaimed Leander.

As he spoke the door opened again and another blind man groped in. This fellow I had seen often. He sold lavender in little envelopes on one of the corners of

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Kearny Street. He was a stout, smooth-faced chap and always kept his chin in the air.

"What misery there is in this world," sighed Cluness as his eye fell upon this latter, "one half the world don't know how——"

"Look, they know each other," said Leander. The lavender man had groped his way to the Indian's table—evidently it was their especial table—and the two had fallen a-talking. They ordered a sandwich apiece and a small mug of beer.

"Let's do something for 'em," exclaimed Cluness, with a burst of generosity. "Let's make 'em remember this night for years to come. Look at 'em trying to be happy over a bit of dry bread and a pint of flat beer. I'm going to give 'em a dollar each."

"No, no," protested Leander. "Let me fix it, I've more money than you. Let me do a little good now and then. You don't want to hog all the philanthropy, Cluness, *I'll* give 'em something."

"It would be very noble and generous of you, indeed," cried Cluness, "and you'll feel better for it, see if you don't. But I must go to my paralytic. You fellows wait for me. I'll be down in twenty minutes."

I frowned at Leander when Cluness was gone. "Now what tomfoolery is it this time?" said I.

"Tomfoolery," exclaimed Leander blankly. "It's philanthropy. By Jove, here's another chap with his lamps blown out. Look at him."

A third unfortunate, blind as the other two, had just approached the Indian and the lavender man. The three were pals, one could see that at half a glance. No doubt they met at this table every night for beer and sandwiches. The last blind man was a Dutchman. I had seen him from time to time on Market Street, with a cigar-box tied to his waist and a bunch of pencils in his fist.

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"Eins!" called the Dutchman to the Kanaka, as he sat down with the lavender man and the Indian. "Eins—mit a hem sendvidge."

"Excuse me," said Leander, coming up to their table.

What was it? Did those three beggars, their instinct trained by long practice, recognize the alms-giver in the sound of Leander's voice, or in the step? It is hard to say, but instantly each one of them dropped the mildly convivial and assumed the humbly solicitous air, turning his blind head toward Leander, listening intently. Leander took out his purse and made a great jingling with his money. Now, I knew that Leander had exactly fifteen dollars—no more, no less—fifteen dollars, in three five-dollar gold pieces—not a penny of change. Could it be possible that he was going to give a gold piece to the three beggars? It was, evidently, for I heard him say:

"Excuse me. I've often passed you fellows on the street, in town, and I guess I've always been too short of change, or in too much of a hurry to remember you. But I'm going to make up for it now, if you'll permit me. Here—" and he jingled his money—"here is a five-dollar gold piece that I'd like to have you spend between the three of you to-night, and drink my health, and—and—have a good time, you know. Catch on?"

They caught on.

"May God bless you, young man!" exclaimed the old lavender man.

The Indian grunted expressively.

The Dutchman twisted about in his place and shouted in the direction of the bar:

"Mek ut er bottle Billzner und er Gotha druffle, mit ein *im*-borted Frankfooter bei der side on."

The Kanaka woman came up, and the Dutchman repeated his order. The lavender man paused, reflectively tapping his brow, then he delivered himself:

"A half spring chicken," he said with profound gravity, "rather under done, and some chicory salad and a bottle of white wine—put the bottle in a little warm water for about two minutes—and some lyonnaise potatoes with onions, and—"

"Donner wetter," shouted the Dutchman, "genuch!" smiting the table with his fist.

The other subsided. The Kanaka woman turned to the Indian.

"Whisky," he grunted, "plenty whisky, big beef-steak, soh," and he measured off a yard on the table.

"Leander," said I, when he rejoined me, "that was foolishness, you've thrown away your five dollars and these fellows are going to waste it in riotous living. You see the results of indiscriminate charity."

"I've *not* thrown it away. Cluness would say that if it made them happier according to their lights it was well invested. I hate the charity that means only medicines, clean sheets, new shoes, and sewerage. Let 'em be happy in their own way." There could be no doubt that the three blind men were happy. They loaded their table with spring chickens, Gotha truffles, beefsteaks, and all manner of "alcoholic beverages," till the zinc disappeared beneath the accumulation of plates and bottles. They drank each other's health and they pledged that of Leander, standing up. The Dutchman ordered: "Zwei Billzner more alreatty." The lavender man drank his warmed white wine with gasps of infinite delight, and after the second whisky bottle had been opened, the Indian began to say strange and terrible things in his own language.

Cluness came in and beamed on them.

"See how happy you've made them, Leander," he said gratefully. "They'll always remember this night."

"They always will," said Leander solemnly.

"I've got to go though," said Cluness. I made as if

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to go with him but Leander plucked my coat under the table. I caught his eye.

"I guess we two will stay" said I. Cluness left, thanking us again and again.

"I don't know what it is," said I seriously to Leander, "but to-night you seem to me to be too good to be wholesome."

"I," said Leander blankly. "But I suppose I should expect to be misjudged."

Just then the Kanaka woman came over to give us our check.

"This is on me," said Leander, but he was so slow in fumbling for his purse that I was obliged, in all decency, to pay.

After she left *us*, the Kanaka went over to the blind men's table, and, check-pad in hand, ran her eye over the truffles, beer, chicken, beefsteak, wine, and whisky, and made out her check.

"Four dollars, six bits," she announced.

There was a silence; not one of the blind men moved.

"Watch now," said Leander.

"Four, six bits," repeated the Kanaka, her hand on her hip.

Still none of the blind men moved.

"Vail, den," cried the Dutchman, "vich von you two vellars has dose money, pay oop. Fier thalers und sax beets."

"I haven't it," exclaimed the lavender man, "Jim has it," he added, turning to the Indian.

"No have got, no have got," grunted the Indian. "You have got, you or Charley."

I looked at Leander.

"Now, what have you done?"

For answer Leander showed me three five-dollar gold pieces in the palm of his hand.

"Each one of those chaps thinks that one of the

other two has the gold piece. I just pretended to give it to one of 'em, jingled my coin, and then put it back. I didn't give 'em a cent. Each one thought I had given it to the other two. How could they tell, they were blind, don't you see."

I reached for my hat.

"I'm going to get out of here."

Leander pulled me back.

"Not just yet, wait a few moments. Listen."

"Vail, vail," cried the Dutchman, beginning to get red. "You doand vants to cheats Missus Amaloa, den berhaps—yes, Zhim," he cried to the Indian, "pay oop or ees ut *you* den, Meest'r Paites, dat hab dose finf thalers?"

"No have got," gurgled the Indian, swaying in his place as he canted the neck of the whisky bottle toward his lips.

"I thought you had the money," protested Mr. Bates, the lavender man, "you or Jim."

"No have got," whooped the Indian, beginning to get angry. "Hug-gh! *You* got money. He give *you* money," and he turned his face toward the Dutchman.

"That's what *I* thought," asserted Mr. Bates.

"Tausend Teufels *no*," shouted the other. "I tell you *no*."

"*You, you*," growled the Indian, plucking at Mr. Bates' coat sleeve, "you have got."

"Yah, soh," cried the Dutchman, shaking his finger at the lavender man, excitedly, "pay dose finf thalers, Meest'r Paites."

"Pay yourself," exclaimed the other, "I haven't touched them. I'll be *any* name, I'll be *any* name if I've touched them."

"Well, I ain't going to wait here all night," shrilled the Kanaka woman impatiently. The Dutchman shook his finger solemnly toward where he thought the Indian was sitting.

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"It's der Indyun. It's Zhim. Get ut vrom Zhim."

"Lie, lie," vociferated the Indian, "white man lie. No have got. *You* have got, or *you*."

"I'll turn my pockets inside out," exclaimed Mr. Bates.

"Schmarty," cried the Dutchman. "Can I *see* dose pocket?"

"Thief, thief," exclaimed the Indian, shaking his long black hair. "You steal money."

The other two turned on him savagely.

"There ain't no man going to call me that."

"Vat he say, vait, und I will his het mit der boddle demolisch. Who you say dat to, *mee*, or Meest'r Bates?"

"Oh, you make me tired," cried the lavender man, "you two. *One* of you two, pay Missus Amaloa and quit fooling."

"Come on," cried the Kanaka, "pay up or I'll ring for the police."

"Vooling, vooling," shouted the Dutchman, dancing in his rage. "You sheats Missus Amaloa und you gall dot vooling."

"Who cheats?" cried the other two simultaneously.

"Vail, how do *I* know," yelled the Dutchman, purple to the eyes. "How do *I* know vich."

The Kanaka turned to Leander.

"Say, which of these fellows did you give that money to?"

Leander came up.

"Ah-h, *now* we vill know," said the Dutchman.

Leander looked from one to the other. Then an expression of perplexity came into his face. He scratched an ear.

"Well, I thought it was this German gentleman."

"*Vat!*"

"Only it seems to me I had the money in my left hand, and he, you see, is on the right hand of the table. It might have been him, and then again it might have

been one of the other two gentlemen. It's so difficult to remember. Wasn't it you," turning to Mr. Bates, "or no, wasn't it *you?*" to the Indian. "But it *couldn't* have been the Indian gentleman, and it *couldn't* have been Mr. Bates here, and yet I'm sure it *wasn't* the German gentleman, and, however, I *must* have given it to one of the three. Didn't I lay the coin down on the table and go away and leave it?" Leander struck his forehead. "Yes, I think that's what I did. I'm sorry," he said to the Kanaka, "that you are having any trouble, it's some misunderstanding."

"Oh, I'll get it all right," returned the Kanaka, confidently. "Come on, one of you fellows dig up."

Then the quarrel broke out afresh. The three blind men rose to their feet, blackguarding and vilifying one another till the room echoed. Now it was Mr. Bates and the Dutchman versus the Indian, now the Indian and Dutchman versus Mr. Bates, now the Indian and Mr. Bates versus the Dutchman. At every instant the combinations varied with kaleidoscopic swiftness. They shouted, they danced, and they shook their fists toward where they guessed each other's faces were. The Indian, who had been drinking whisky between intervals of the quarrel, suddenly began to rail and howl in his own language, and at times even the Dutchman lapsed into the vernacular. The Kanaka woman lost her wits altogether, and declared that in three more minutes she would ring for the police.

Then all at once the Dutchman swung both fists around him and caught the Indian a tremendous crack on the side of the head. The Indian vented an ear-splitting war-whoop and began pounding Mr. Bates who stood next to him. In the next instant the three were fighting all over the room. They lost each other, they struck furious blows at the empty air, they fell over tables and chairs, or suddenly came together with a

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dreadful shock and terrible cries of rage. The Dutchman bumped against Leander and before he could get away had smashed his silk hat down over his ears. The noise of their shouting could have been heard a block.

"Thief, thief."

"Teef yourselluf, pay oop dose finf thalers."

"No have got, no have got."

And then the door swung in and four officers began rounding them up like stampeded sheep. Not until he was in the wagon could the Dutchman believe that it was not the Indian and Mr. Bates who had him by either arm, and even in the wagon, as they were being driven to the precinct station-house, the quarrel broke out from time to time.

As we heard the rattle of the patrol-wagon's wheels growing fainter over the cobbles, we rose to go. The Kanaka stood with her hands on her hips glaring at the zinc table with its remnants of truffle, chicken, and beefsteak and its empty bottles. Then she exclaimed, "And I'm shy four dollars and six bits."

On the following Saturday night Leander and I were coming from a Mexican dinner at Luna's. Suddenly someone caught our arms from behind. It was Cluness.

"I want to thank you fellows again," he exclaimed, "for your kindness to those three blind chaps the other night. It was really good of you. I believe they had five dollars to spend between them. It was really fine of you, Leander."

"Oh, I don't mind five dollars," said Leander, "if it can make a poor fellow any happier for a few moments. That's the only thing that's worth while in this life."

"I'll bet you felt better and happier for doing it."

"Well, it did make me happy."

"Of course, and those three fellows will never forget that night."

"No, I guess they won't," said Leander.

SON OF A SHEIK

THE smell of the warm slime on the Jeliffe River and the sweet, heavy, and sickening odour that exhaled into the unspeakable heat of the desert air from the bunches of dead and scorched water-reeds are with me yet; also the sight of the long stretch of dry mud bank, rising by shallow and barely perceptible degrees to the edge of the desert sands, and thus disclosed by the shrinkage of the Jeliffe during the hot months. The mud banks were very broad and very black except where they touched the desert; here the sand had sifted over them in light transparent sprinklings. In rapidly drying under the sun of the Sahara, they had cracked and warped into thousands of tiny concave cakes that looked, for all the world, like little saucers in which Indian ink has been mixed. (If you are an artist, as was Thévenot, you will the better understand this.)

Then there was the reach of the desert that drew off on either hand and rolled away, ever so gently, toward the place where the hollow sky dropped out of sight behind the shimmering horizon, swelling grandly and gradually like some mighty breast which, panting for breath in the horrible heat, had risen in a final gasp and had then, in the midst of it, suddenly stiffened and become rigid. On this colourless bosom of the desert, where nothing stirred but the waxing light in the morning and the waning light in the night, lay tumbled red and grey rocks, with thin drifts of sand in their rifts and crevices and grey-green cacti squatting or sprawling in their blue shadows. And there was nothing more, noth-

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ing, nothing, except the appalling heat and the maddening silence.

And in the midst of it all—we.

Now "we," broadly and generally speaking, were the small right wing of General Pawtrot's division of the African service; speaking less broadly and less generally, "we" were the advance-guard of said division; and, speaking in the narrowest and most particular sense, "we" were the party of war-correspondents, specials, extras, etc., who were accompanying said advance-guard of said wing of said army of said service for reasons herein to be set forth.

As the long black scow of the commissariat went crawling up the torpid river with the advance-guard straggling along upon the right, "we" lay upon the deck under the shadow of the scow's awning and talked and drank seltzer.

I forget now what led up to it, but Ponscarme had said that the Arabs were patriotic, when Bab Azzoun cut in and said something which I shall repeat as soon as I have told you about Bab Azzoun himself.

Bab Azzoun had been born twenty-nine years before this time, at Tlemcen, of Kabyle parents (his father was a sheik). He had been transplanted to France at the age of ten, and had flourished there in a truly remarkable manner. He had graduated fifth from the Polytechnique; he had written books that had been "*couronné par l'Académie*"; he had become naturalized; he had been prominent in politics (no one can cut a wide swath in Paris in anything without hitting against *la politique*) he had occupied important positions in two embassies; he was a diplomat of no mean qualities; he had influence; he dressed in faultless French fashion; he had owned "*Crusader*"; he had lost money on him; he had applied to the government for the office of "*Sous-chef-des bureaux-Arabs dans l'Oran*," in order to recoup;

he had obtained it; he had come on with "us," and was now on this, his first visit to his fatherland since his tenth year, on his way to his post.

And when Ponscarme had spoken thus about the patriotism of the Arabs, Bab Azzoun made him answer: "The Arabs are not sufficiently educated to be true patriots."

"Bah!" said Santander, "a man does not require to be educated in order to be a patriot. And, indeed, the rudest nations have ever been the most devotedly patriotic."

"Yes," said Bab Azzoun, "but it is a narrow and a very selfish patriotism."

"I can't see that," put in Ponscarme; "a patriot is like an egg—he is either good or bad. There is no such thing as a 'good enough egg,' there is no such thing as a 'good enough patriot'—if a man is one at all, he is a perfect one."

"I agree," answered Bab Azzoun; "yet patriotism can be more or less narrow. Listen and I will explain"—he raised himself from the deck on his elbow and gestured with the amber mouthpiece of his chibouk—"Patriotism has passed through five distinct stages; first it was only love of family—of parents and kindred; then, as the family grows and expands into the tribe, it, too, as merely a large family, becomes the object of affection, of patriotic devotion. This is the second stage—the stage of the tribe, the clan. In the third stage, the tribe has sought protection behind the inclosure of walls. It is the age of cities; patriotism is the devotion to the city; men are Athenians ere Grecians, Romans ere Italians. In the next period, patriotism means affection for the state, for the county, for the province; and Burgundian, Norman, and Fleming gave freely of their breast-blood for Burgundy, Normandy, and Flanders; while we of to-day form the latest, but not the last, link of the

lengthening chain by honouring, loving, and serving the country above all considerations, be they of tribe, or town, or tenure. Yet I do not believe this to be the last, the highest, the noblest form of patriotism.

"No," continued Bab Azzoun, "this development shall go on, ever expanding, ever mounting, until, carried upon its topmost crest, we attain to that height from which we can look down upon the world as our country, humanity as our countrymen, and he shall be the best patriot who is the least patriotic."

"Ah-h, *fichtre !*" exclaimed Santander, listlessly, throwing a cushion at Bab Azzoun's head; "*va te coucher*. It's too hot to theorize; you're either a great philosopher, Bab, or a large-sized"—he looked at him over the rim of his tin cup before concluding—"idiot."

But Bab Azzoun had gone on talking in the meanwhile, and now finishing with "and so you must not blame me, if, looking upon them" (he meant the Arabs) "and theirs, in this light, I find this African campaign a sorry business for France to be engaged in—a vast and powerful government terrorizing into submission a horde of half-starved fanatics," he yawned, "all of which is very bad—very bad. Give me some more seltzer."

We were aroused by the sudden stoppage of the scow. A detachment of "Zephyrs" near us, upon the right bank, scrambled together in a hollow square. A battalion of Coulouglis, with *haik* and *bournous* rippling, scuttled by us at a gallop, and the Twenty-Third Chasseurs d'Afrique in the front line halted at an "order" on the crest of a sand ridge, which hid the horizon from sight. The still, hot air of the Sahara was suddenly pervaded with something that roused us to our feet in an instant. Thévenot whipped out his ever-ready sketch-book and began blocking in the landscape

and the position of the troops, while Santander snatched his note-book and stylograph.

Of the scene which now gathered upon us I can remember little, only out of that dark chaos can I rescue a few detached and fragmentary impressions—all the more vivid, nevertheless, from their isolation, all the more distinct from the grey blur of the background against which they trace themselves.

Instantly, somewhere disquietingly near, an event, or rather a whirl of events that rushed and writhed themselves together into a maze of dizzying complexity, suddenly evolved and widened like the fierce, quick rending open of some vast scroll, and there were zigzag hurrys to and fro and a surging heavenward of a torrent of noises, noises of men and noises of feet, noises of horses and noises of arms, noises that hustled fiercely upward above the brown mass and closed together in the desert air, blending or jarring one with another, joining and separating, reuniting and dividing; noises that rattled; noises that clanked; noises that boomed, or shrilled, or thundered, or quavered. And then came sight of blue-grey tumulous curtains—but whether of smoke or dust, I could not say, tumbling and billowing, bellying out with the hot tempest-breath of the battle-demon that raged within, and whose outermost fringes were torn by serrated files of flashing steel and wavering ranks of red.

And this was all at first. I knew we had been attacked and that behind those boiling smoke-billows, somewhere and somehow, men, infuriated into beasts, were grappling and struggling, each man, with every sinew on the strain, striving to kill his fellow.

And now we were in the midst of a hollow square of our soldiery, yet how we came there I cannot recall, though I remember that the water of the Jeliffe made my clothes heavy and uncomfortable, although a mortal

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fear sat upon me of being shot down by some of our own frenzied soldiers. And then came that awful rib-cracking pressure, as, from some outward, unseen cause, the square was thrown back upon itself. And with it all the smell of sweat of horses, and of men, the odour of the powder-smoke, the blinding, suffocating, stupefying clouds of dust, the horrible fear, greater than all others, of being pushed down beneath those thousands of trampling feet, the pitch of excitement that sickens and weakens, the momentary consciousness—vanishing as soon as felt—that this was what men called “war,” and that we were experiencing the reality of what we had so often read.

It was not inspiring; there was no romance, no poetry about it; there was nothing in it but the hideous jar, one against the other, of men drunk with the blood-lust that eighteen hundred years had not quenched.

I looked at Bab Azzoun; he was standing at the gunwale of the scow (somehow we were back on the scow again) with an unloaded pistol in his hand. He was watching the battle on the bank. His nostrils quivered, and he shifted his feet exactly like an excited thoroughbred. On a sudden, a trooper of the Eleventh Cuirassiers came spinning round and round out of the brown of the battle, gulping up blood, and pitched, wheezing, face downward, into the soft ooze where the river licked at the bank, raising ruddy bubbles in the water as he blew his life-breath in gasps into it, and raking it into gridiron patterns as his quivering blue fingers closed into fists. Instantly afterward came a mighty rush across the river beneath our very bows. Forty-odd cuirassiers burst into it, followed by eighty or a hundred Kabyles.

I can recall just how the horse-hoofs rattled on the saucer-like cakes of dry mud and flung them up in countless fragments behind them. They were a fine

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sight, those Kabyles, with their fierce red horses, their dazzling white *bournouses*, their long, thin, murderous rifle-barrels, thundering and splashing past, while from the whole mass of them, from under the shadow of every white *haik*, from every black-bearded lip, was rolling their war-cry: "Allah, Allah-il-Allah!"

Some long-dormant recollections stirred in Bab Azzoun at this old battle-shout. As he faced them now, he was no longer the cold, cynical *boulevardier* of the morning. He looked as he must have looked when he played, a ten-year-old boy, about the feet of the horses in his father's black tent. He saw the long lines of the *douars* of his native home; he saw the camels, and the caravan crawling toward the sunset; he saw the women grinding meal; he saw his father, the bearded sheik; he saw the Arab horsemen riding down to battle; he saw the palm-broad spear-points and the blue *yataghans*. In an instant of time all the long years of culture and education were stripped away as a garment. Once more he stood and stepped the Kabyle. And with these recollections, his long-forgotten native speech came rushing to his tongue, and in a long, shrill cry, he answered his countrymen in their own language:

"*Allah-il-Allah, Mohammed ressoul Allah.*"

He passed me at a bound, leaped from the scow upon the back of a riderless horse, and, mingling with the Kabyles, rode out of sight.

And that was the last I ever saw of Bab Azzoun.

A DEFENSE OF THE FLAG

IT HAD been the celebration of the feast of the Holy St. Patrick, and the various Irish societies of the city had turned out in great force—Sons of Erin, Fenians, Cork Rebels, and all. The procession had formed on one of the main avenues and had marched and counter-marched up and down through the American city; had been reviewed by the mayor standing on the steps of the City Hall and wearing a green sash; and had finally disbanded in the afternoon in the business quarter of the city. So that now the streets in that vicinity were full of the perspiring members of the parade, the emerald colour flashing in and out of the slow-moving maze of the crowd, like strands of green in the warp and woof of a loom.

There were marshals of the procession, with batons and big green rosettes, breathing easily once more after the long agony of sitting upon a nervous horse that walked sideways. There were the occupants of the endless line of carriages, with their green sashes, stretching their cramped and stiffened legs. There were the members of the various political clubs and secret societies, in their one good suit of ready-made clothes, cotton gloves, and silver-fringed scarfs. There was the little girl, with green tassels on her boots, who had walked by her father's side carrying a set bouquet of cut flowers in a lace paper-holder. There was the little boy who wore a green high hat, with a pipe stuck in the brim, and who carried the water for the band; and there were the members of the groups upon the floats, with overcoats and sacques thrown over their costumes and spangles.

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The men were in great evidence in and around the corner saloons talking aloud, smoking, drinking, and spitting, and calling for "Jim," or "Connors," or "Duffy," over the heads of the crowd, and what with the speeches, and the beer, and the frequent fights, and the appropriate damning of England and the Orange-men, the day promised to end in right spirit and proper mood.

It so came about that young Shotover, on his way to his club, met with one of these groups near the City Hall, and noticed that they continually looked up toward its dome and seemed very well pleased with what they saw there. After he had passed them some little distance, Shotover, as well, looked up in that direction and saw that the Irish flag was flying from the staff above the cupola.

Shotover was American-bred and American-born, and his father and mother before him and their father and mother before them, and so on and back till one brought up in the hold of a ship called the *Mayflower*, further back than which it is not necessary to go.

He never voted. He did not know enough of the trend of national politics even to bet on the presidential elections. He did not know the names of the aldermen of his city, nor how many votes were controlled by the leaders of the Dirigo or Comanche Clubs; but when he was told that the Russian *moujik* or the Bulgarian serf, who had lived for six months in America (long enough for their votes to be worth three dollars), was as much of an American citizen as himself, he thought of the Shotovers who had framed the constitution in '75, had fought for it in '13 and '64, and wondered if this were so. He had a strange and stubborn conviction that whatever was American was right and whatever was right was American, and that somehow his country had nothing to be ashamed of in the past, nor afraid of in the future, for

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all the monstrous corruptions and abuses that obtained at present.

But just now this belief had been rudely jarred, and he walked on slowly to his club, the blood gradually flushing his face up to the roots of his hair. Once there, he sat for a long time in the big bay-window, looking absently out into the street, with eyes that saw nothing, very thoughtful. All at once he took up his hat, clapped it upon his head with the air of a man who has made up his mind, and went out, turning in the direction of the City Hall.

When he arrived there, no one noticed him, for he made it a point to walk with a brisk, determined air, as though he were bent upon some especially important business, "which I am," he said to himself as he went on and up through tessellated corridors, between court-rooms and offices of clerks, commissioners, and collectors.

It was a long time before he found the right stairway, which was a circuitous, ladder-like flight that wormed its way upward between the two walls of the dome. The door leading to the stairway was in a kind of garret above the top floor of the building proper, and was sandwiched in between coal-bunkers, water-tanks, and gas-meters. Shotover tried it, and found it locked. He swore softly to himself, and attempted to break it open. He soon concluded that this would make too much noise, and so turned about and descended to the floor below. A negro, with an immense goitre and a black velvet skull-cap, was cleaning the woodwork outside a county commissioner's door. He directed Shotover to the porter in the office of the Weather Bureau, if he wished to go up in the cupola for the view. It was after four by this time, and Shotover found the porter of the Weather Bureau piling the chairs on the tables and sweeping out after office hours.

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"Well, you see," said this one, "we don't allow nobody to go up in the cupola. You can get a permit from the architect's office, but I guess they'll be shut up there by now."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Shotover; "I'm leaving town to-morrow, and I particularly wanted to get the view from the cupola. They say you can see well out into the ocean."

The porter had ignored him by this time, and was sweeping up a great dust. Shotover waited a moment. "You don't think I could arrange to get up there this afternoon?" he went on. The porter did not turn around.

"We don't allow no one up there without a permit," he answered.

"I suppose," returned Shotover, "that you have the keys?"

No answer.

"You have the keys, haven't you—the keys to the door there at the foot of the stairs?"

"We don't allow no one to go up there without a permit. Didn't you hear me before?"

Shotover took a five-dollar gold piece from his pocket, laid it on the corner of a desk, and contemplated it with reflective sadness. "I'm sorry," he said; "I particularly wanted to see that view before I left."

"Well, you see," said the porter, straightening up, "there was a young feller jumped off there once, and a woman tried to do it a little while after, and the officers in the police station downstairs made us shut it up; but's long as you only want to see the view and don't want to jump off, I guess it'll be all right," and he leaned one hand against the edge of the desk and coughed slightly behind the other.

While he had been talking, Shotover had seen between the two windows on the opposite side of the room

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a very large wooden rack full of pigeonholes and compartments. The weather and signal-flags were tucked away in these, but on the top was a great folded pile of bunting. It was sooty and grimy, and the new patches in it showed violently white and clean. But Shotover saw, with a strange and new catch at the heart, that it was tri-coloured.

"If you will come along with me now, sir," said the porter, "I'll open the door for you."

Shotover let him go out of the room first, then jumped to the other side of the room, snatched the flag down, and, hiding it as best he could, followed him out of the room. They went up the stairs together. If the porter saw anything, he was wise enough to keep quiet about it.

"I won't bother about waiting for you," said he, as he swung the door open. "Just lock the door when you come down, and leave the key with me at the office. If I ain't there, just give it to the fellow at the news-stand on the first floor, and I can get it in the morning."

"All right," answered Shotover, "I will," and he hugged the flag close to him, going up the narrow stairs two at a time.

After a long while he came out on the narrow railed balcony that ran around the lantern, and paused for breath as he looked around and below him. Then he turned quite giddy and sick for a moment and clutched desperately at the hand-rail, resisting a strong impulse to sit down and close his eyes.

Seemingly insecure as a bubble, the great dome rolled away from him on all sides down to the buttresses around the drum, and below that the gulf seemed endless, stretching down, down, down, to the thin yellow ribbon of the street. Underneath him, the City Hall itself dropped away, a confused heap of tinned roofs, domes, chimneys, and cornices, and beyond that lay the

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city itself spreading out like a great grey map. Over it there hung a greasy, sooty fog of a dark-brown colour. In places the higher buildings overtopped the fog. Here, it was pierced by a slender church-spire. In another place, a dome bulged up over it, or, again, some skyscraping office-building shouldered itself above its level to the purer, cleaner air. Looking down at the men in the streets, Shotover could see only their feet moving back and forth underneath their hat-brims as they walked. The noises of the city reached him in a subdued and steady murmur, and the strong wind that was blowing brought him the smell of the vegetable-gardens in the suburbs, the odour of trees and hay from the more distant country, and occasionally a faint whiff of salt from the ocean.

The sight was a sort of inspiration to Shotover. The great American city, with its riches and resources, boiling with the life and energy of a new people, young, enthusiastic, ambitious, and so full of hope and promise for the future, all striving and struggling in the fore part of the march of empire, building a new nation, a new civilization, a new world, while over it all floated the Irish flag.

Shotover turned back, seized the halyards, and brought the green banner down with a single movement of his arm. Then he knotted the other bundle of bunting to the cords and ran it up. As it reached the top, the bundle twisted, turned on itself, unfolded, suddenly caught the wind, and then, in a single, long billow, rolled out into the stars and bars of Old Glory.

Shotover shut his teeth against a cheer, and the blood went tingling up and down through his body to his very finger-tips. He looked up, leaning his hand against the mast, and felt it quiver and thrill as the great flag tugged at it. The sound of the halyards rattling and snapping came to his ears like music.

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He was not ashamed then to be enthusiastic, and did not feel in the least melodramatic or absurd. He took off his hat, and, as the great flag blew out stiffer and snapped and strained in the wind, looked up at it and said over softly to himself: "Lexington, Valley Forge, Yorktown, Mexico, the Alamo, 1812, Gettysburg, Shiloh, the Wilderness."

Meanwhile the knot of people on the sidewalk below, that had watched his doings, had grown into a crowd. The green badge was upon every breast, and there came to his ears a sound that was out of chord with the minor drone, the worst sound in the human gamut, the sound of an angry mob.

The high, windy air and the excitement of the occasion began to tell on Shotover, so that when half an hour later there came a rush of many feet up the stairway, and a crash upon the door that led up to the lantern, he buttoned his coat tightly around him, and shut his teeth and fists.

When the door finally went down and the first man jumped in, Shotover hit him.

Terence Shannon told about this afterward. "It was a birdie. Ah, but say, y' ought to of seen um. He let go with his left, like de piston-rod of de engine wot broke loose dat time at de power-house, an' Duffy's had an eye like a fried egg ivver since."

The crowd paused, partly through surprise and partly because the body of Mr. Duffy lay across their feet and barred their way. There were about a dozen of them, all more or less drunk. The one exception was Terence Shannon, who was the candidate of the boss of his ward for a number on the force. In view of this fact, Shannon was trying to preserve order. He took advantage of the moment of hesitation to step in between Shotover and the crowd.

"Aw, say, youse fellows rattle me slats, sure. Do yer

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think the City Hall is the place to scrap, wid the jug only two floors below? Ye'll be havin' the whole shootin' match of the force up here in a minute. Maybe yer would like to sober up in the 'hole in the wall.' Now just pipe down quiet-like, an' swear um in reg'lar at the station-house downstairs. Ye've got a straight disturbin'-the-peace case wid um. Ah, sure, straight goods. I ain't givin' yer no gee-hee."

But the crowd stood its ground and glared at Shotover over Shannon's head. Then Connors yelled and drew out his revolver. "B'yes, we've got a right," he exclaimed. "It's the boord av aldermen gave us the permit to show the green flag of ould Ireland here to-day. It's him as is breaking the law, not we, confound you." ("Confound you" was not what Mr. Connors said.)

"He's dead on," said Shannon, turning to Shotover. "It's all ye kin do. Yer're actin' agin the law."

Shotover did not answer, but breathed hard through his nose, wondering at the state of things that made it an offence against the American law to protect the American flag. But all at once Shannon passed him and drew his knife across the halyards, and the great flag collapsed and sank slowly down like a wounded eagle. The crowd cheered, and Shannon said in Shotover's ear: "'Twas to save yer life, me b'y. They're out for blood, sure."

"Now," said Connors, using several altogether impossible nouns and adjectives, "now run up the green flag of ould Ireland again, or ye'll be sorry," and he pointed his revolver at Shotover.

"Say," cried Shannon, in a low voice to Shotover—"say, he's dead stuck on doin' you dirt. I can't hold um. Aw, say Connors, quit your foolin', will you; put up your flas..box—put it up, or—or——" But just here he broke off, and catching up the green flag, threw it out

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in front of Shotover, and cried, laughing, "Ye'll not have the heart to shoot now."

Shotover struck the flag to the ground, set his foot on it, and catching up Old Glory again, flung it round him and faced them, shouting:

"Now shoot!"

But at this, in genuine terror, Shannon flung his hat down and ran in front of Connors himself, fearfully excited, and crying out: "F'r Gawd's sake, Connors, you don't dast do it. Wake up, will yer, it's mornin'. Do yer want to hiv' us all jugged for twenty years? It's treason and rebellion, and I don't know *what* all, for every mug in the gang, if yer just so much as crook dat forefinger. Put it up, ye damned fool. This is a cat w'at has changed colour."

Something of the gravity of the situation had forced its way through the clogged minds of the others, and, as Shannon spoke the last words, Connors's fore-arm was knocked up and he himself was pulled back into the crowd.

You cannot always foretell how one man is going to act, but it is easy to read the intentions of a crowd. Shotover saw a rush in the eyes of the circle that was contracting about him, and turned to face the danger and to fight for the flag as the Shotovers of the old days had so often done.

In the books, the young aristocrat invariably thrashes the clowns who set upon him. But somehow Shotover had no chance with his clowns at all. He hit out wildly into the air as they ran in, and tried to guard against the scores of fists. But their way of fighting was not that which he had learned at his athletic club. They kicked him in the stomach, and, when they had knocked him down, stamped upon his face. It is hard to feel like a martyr and a hero when you can't draw your breath and when your mouth is full of blood and dust and

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broken teeth. Accordingly Shotover gave it up, and fainted away.

When the officers finally arrived, they made no distinction between the combatants, but locked them all up under the charge of "Drunk and Disorderly."

TOPPAN

WHEN Frederick Woodhouse Toppan came out of Thibet and returned to the world in general and to San Francisco in particular, he began to know what it meant to be famous. As he entered street cars and hotel elevators he remarked a sudden observant silence on the part of the other passengers. The reporters became a real instead of a feigned annoyance and the papers at large commenced speaking of him by his last name only. He ceased to cut out and paste in his scrap-book everything that was said of him in the journals and magazines. People composed beforehand clever little things to say to him when they were introduced, and he was asked to indorse new soaps and patented cereals. The great magazines of the country wrote to him for more articles, and his *Through the Highlands of Thibet*, already in its fiftieth thousand, was in everybody's hands.

And he was hardly thirty.

To people who had preconceived ideas as to what an Asiatic explorer should be like, Toppan was disappointing. Where they expected to see a "magnificent physique" in top boots and pith helmet, flung at length upon lion skins, smoking a nargile, they saw only a very much tanned young gentleman, who wore a straw hat and russet leather shoes just like any well-dressed man of the period. They felt vaguely defrauded because he looked ordinary and stylish and knew what to do with his hands and feet in a drawing-room.

He had come to San Francisco for three reasons. First because at that place he was fitting out an expe-

dition for Kamchatka which was to be the big thing of his life, and cause him to be spoken of together with Speke, Nansen, and Stanley; second because the manager of the lecture bureau with whom he had signed had scheduled him to deliver his two lectures there, as he had already done in Boston, New York, and elsewhere; and, third, because Victoria Boyden lived there.

When Toppan got back, the rest of Victoria's men friends shrank considerably when she compared them with Toppan. They were of the type who are in the insurance offices of fathers and uncles during the winter, and in the summer are to be found at the fashionable resorts, where they idle languidly on the beaches in white flannels or play "chopsticks" with the girls on the piano in the hotel parlours. Here, however, was the first white man who had ever crossed Thibet alive, who knew what it meant to go four days without water and who could explain to you the difference between the insanity caused by the lack of sleep and that brought about by a cobra-bite. The men of Victoria's acquaintance never had known what it was to go without two consecutive meals, whereas Toppan at one time in the Himalayas had lived for several weeks upon ten ounces of camel meat per day, after the animals had died under their burdens. Victoria's friends led germans, Toppan led expeditions; their only fatigue came from dancing. Upon one occasion on Mount Everest, Toppan and his companions, caught in a snow-storm where sleep meant death, had kept themselves awake by chewing pipe-tobacco, and rubbing the smarting juice in their eyes. He had had experiences, the like of which none other of her gentlemen friends had ever known and she had cared for him from the first.

When a man tells a girl that he loves her in a voice that can speak in the dialects of the interior Thibetan states around the Tengrinor Lake, or holds her hand in

one that has been sunken deep in the throat of a hunger-mad tiger, she cannot well be otherwise than duly impressed.

To look at, Victoria was a queen. Just the woman you would have chosen to be mated with a man like Toppan, five feet eleven in her tennis shoes, with her head flung well back on her shoulders, and the gait of a goddess; she could look down on most men and in general suggested figures of Brunhild, Boadicea, or Berenice. But to know her was to find her shallow as a sun-shrunken mill-race, to discover that her brilliancy was the cheapest glitter, and to realize that in every way she was lamentably unsuited for the rôle of Toppan's wife. And no one saw this so well as Toppan himself. He knew that she did not appreciate him at one tenth his real value, that she never could and never would understand him, and that he was in every way too good for her.

As his wife he felt sure she would only be a hindrance and a stumbling-block in the career that he had planned for himself, if, indeed, she did not ruin it entirely.

But first impressions were strong with him, and because when he had first known her she had seemed to be fit consort for an emperor, he had gone on loving her as such ever since, making excuses for her trivialities, her petty affectations, her lack of interest in his life work, and even at times her unconcealed ridicule of it. For one thing, Victoria wanted him to postpone his expedition for a year, in order that he might marry her, and Toppan objected to this because he was so circumstanced just then that to postpone meant to abandon it.

No man is stronger than his weakest point. Toppan's weak point was Victoria Boyden, and he acknowledged to himself with a good deal of humiliation that he could not make up his mind to break with her. Perhaps he is

not to be too severely blamed for this. Living so much apart from women as he did and plunged for such long periods into an atmosphere so entirely different from that of ordinary society, he had come to feel intensely where he felt at all, and had lost the faculty possessed by the more conventional, of easy and ephemeral change from one interest to another. Most of Victoria's admirers in a like case would have lit a cigarette and walked off the passion between dawn and dark in one night. But Toppan could not do this. It was the one weak strain in his build, "the little rift within the lute."

One of the natural consequences of their intercourse was that they were never happy together and hailed with hardly concealed relief the advent of a third person. They had absolutely no interests in common, and their meetings were made up of trivial bickerings. They generally parted quarrelling, and then immediately sat down to count the days until they should meet again. I have no doubt they loved each other well enough, but somehow they were not made to be mated—and that was all there was about it.

During the month before the Kamchatka expedition sailed Toppan worked hard. He commanded jointly with Bushby, a lieutenant in the Civil Engineer Corps, and the two toiled from the dawn of one morning till the dawn of the next, perfecting the last details of their undertaking: correcting charts, lading rifles and ammunition, experimenting with beef extracts and pemmican, and corresponding with geographical societies.

Through it all Toppan found time to revise his notes for his last lecture, and to call upon Victoria twice a week.

On one of these occasions he said: "How do you get on with my book, Vic, pretty stupid reading?" He had sent her from Bombay the first copy that his London publishers had forwarded to him.

"Not at all," she answered, "I like it very much, do you know it has all the fascination of a novel for me. Your style is just as clear and strong as can be, and your descriptions of scenery and the strange and novel bits of human nature in such an unfrequented corner of the globe are much more interesting than the most imaginative and carefully elaborated fiction; those botanical and zoölogical data must be invaluable to scientific men, I should think; but of course I can't understand them very well. How do you do it, Fred? It is certainly very wonderful. One would think that you were a born writer as well as explorer. But now see here, Freddy; I want to talk to you again about putting off your trip to—what do you call it—for just a year, for my sake."

After they had wrangled over this oft-mooted question they parted coldly, and Toppan went away feeling aroused and unhappy.

That night he and Bushby were making a chemical analysis of a new kind of smokeless powder. Bushby poured out a handful of saltpeter and charcoal upon a leaf torn from a back number of the *Scientific Weekly* and slid it across the table toward him. "Now when you burn this stuff," remarked Toppan, spreading it out upon the table with his finger, "you get a reaction of $2\text{KNO}_3 + 3\text{C} = \text{CO}^2 - \text{CO} +$, I forget the rest. Get out your formulæ in the bookcase there behind you, will you, and look it up for me?"

While Bushby was fingering the leaves of the volume, Toppan caught sight of his name on the leaf of the *Scientific Weekly* which held the mixture. Looking closely he saw that it occurred in a criticism of his book which he had not yet seen. He brushed the charcoal and saltpeter to one side and ran his eyes over the lines:

"Toppan's great work," said the writer, "is a book not only for the scientist but for all men. Though deal-

ing to a great extent with the technicalities of geography, geology, and the sister sciences, the author has known how to throw his thoughts and observations into a form of remarkable lightness and brilliancy. In Toppan's hands the book has all the fascination of a novel. His style is clear and strong, and his descriptions of scenery, and of the weird and unusual phases of human nature to be met with in such an unfrequented corner of the globe are much more interesting than most of the imaginative and carefully elaborated romances of adventure in the present day. His botanical and zoölogical data will be invaluable to scientific men. It is rare we find the born explorer a born writer as well."

As he read, Toppan's heart grew cold within his ribs. "She must have learnt it like a parrot," he mused. "I wonder if she even——"

"Equals $\text{CO}^2 + \text{CO} + \text{N}^3 + \text{KCO}^3$," said Bushby, turning to the table again, "come on, old man, hurry up and let's get through with this. It's nearly three o'clock."

The next evening Toppan was to deliver his lecture at the Grand Opera House, but in the afternoon he called upon Victoria with a purpose. She was out at the time but he determined to wait for her, and sat down in the drawing-room until she should come. Presently he saw his book with its marbled cover—familiar to him now as the face of a child to its father—lying conspicuously upon the centre table. It was the copy he had mailed to her from Bombay. He picked it up and ran over the leaves; not one of them had been cut. He replaced the book upon the table and left the house.

That night the Grand Opera House was packed to the doors and the street in front was full of hoarse, over-worked policemen and wailing coachmen. The awning was out over the sidewalk and the steps of the church across the street were banked with row upon row of watching faces. It was known that this was to be the

last lecture of Toppan's before he plunged into the wilderness again, and that the world would not see him for five years. The mayor of the city introduced him in a speech that was too long, and then Toppan stood up and faced the artillery of opera-glasses, and tried not to look into the right-hand proscenium box that held Victoria Boyden and her party.

He kept the audience spell-bound for an hour, while he forgot his useless notes, forgot his hearers and the circumstances of time and place, forgot about Victoria Boyden and their mean little squabbles, and remembered only that he was Toppan, the great explorer, who had led his men through the interior of Thibet, and had lived to tell it to these people now before him. For an hour he made the people, too, forget themselves in him and his story, till they felt something of what he had felt on those occasions when Hope was a phantom scattering chaff, when Resolve wore thin under friction of disaster, when the wheels of Life ran very low and men thanked God that they *could* die. For an hour he led them steadily into the heart of the unknown: the twilight of the unseen. Then he had an inspiration.

He had worked himself up to a mood wherein he was himself at his very best, when his chosen life-work made all else seem trivial and the desire to do great things was big within him. In this mood he somehow happened to remember Victoria Boyden, which he should not have done because she was not to be thought of in connection with great deeds and high resolves. But just at that moment Toppan felt his strength and knew how great he really was, and how small and belittled she seemed in comparison. She had practised a small deception upon him, had done him harm and would do him more. He suddenly resolved to break with her at that very moment and place while he was strong and able to do it.

He did it by cleverly working into his talk a little story whose real meaning no one but Victoria understood. For the audience it was but a bright little bit of folk-lore of upper India. For Victoria, he might as well have struck her across the face. It was cruel; it was even vulgarly cruel, which is brutal, it was vindictive and perhaps cowardly, but the man was smarting under a long-continued bitterness and he had at last turned and with closed eyes struck back savagely.

The exalted mood which had brought this about was with him during the rest of the evening, was with him when he drove back to his rooms in his coupé with Bushby, and was with him as he flung himself to bed and went to sleep with a deep sigh of relief for that it was now over and done with forever.

But it left him during the night and he awoke the next morning to a realization of what he had done and of all he had lost. He began by remembering Victoria as he had first known her, by recalling only what was good in her, and by palliating all that was bad. From this starting point he went on till he was in an agony of grief and remorse and ended by lashing himself into the belief that Victoria had been his inspiration and had given zest and interest to everything he had done. Now he bitterly regretted that he had thrown her over. He had never in his life before loved her so much. He was unfitted for work during all that day and passed the next night in unavailing lamentations. His morning's mail brought him face to face with the crisis of his life. It came in the shape of a letter from Victoria Boyden.

It was a very thick and a very heavy letter and she must have spent most of the previous day in writing it. He was surprised that she should have written him at all after what had passed on that other evening, but he was deeply happy as well because he knew precisely what the letter would be, before he opened it. It would

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be a petition for his forgiveness and a last attempt to win him back to her again.

And Toppan knew that she would succeed. He knew that in his present mood he would make any sacrifice for her sake. He foresaw that her appeal would be too strong for him. That was, if he opened and read her letter. Just now the question was, should he do it? If he read that letter he knew that he was lost, his career would stop where it was. To be great he had only to throw it unopened into the fire; yes, but to be great without her, was it worth the while? What would fame and honour and greatness be, without her? He realized that the time had come to choose between her and his career and that it all depended upon the opening of her letter. Two hours later, he flung himself down before his table and took her letter in his hand. His fingers Itched for the touch of it. Close to his elbow lay a little copper knife with poison grooves, such as are used by the Hill-tribes in the Kuen-Lun Mountains. Toppan kept it for a paper cutter; just now he picked it up. For a long time he remained sitting, holding Victoria's letter in one hand, the little knife in the other. Then he put the point under the flap of the envelope and slowly cut it open.

Two weeks later the Kamchatka Expedition sailed with Bushby in command. Toppan did not go; he was married to Victoria Boyden that fall.

Last season I met Toppan at Coronado Beach. The world has about forgotten him now, but he is quite content as he is. He is head clerk in old Mr. Boyden's insurance office and he plays a capital game of tennis.

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IN FRONT of the entrance a "spieler" stood on a starch-box and beat upon a piece of tin with a stick, and we weakly succumbed to his frenzied appeals and went inside. We did this, I am sure, partly to please the "spieler," who would have been dreadfully disappointed if we had not done so, but partly, too, to please Toppan, who was always interested in the great beasts and liked to watch them.

It is possible that you may remember Toppan as the man who married Victoria Boyden, and, in so doing, thrust his greatness from him and became a bank clerk instead of an explorer. After he married, he came to be quite ashamed of what he had done in Thibet and Africa and other unknown corners of the earth, and, after a while, very seldom spoke of that part of his life at all; or, when he did, it was only to allude to it as a passing boyish fancy, altogether foolish and silly, like calf-love and early attempts at poetry.

"I used to think I was going to set the world on fire at one time," he said once; "I suppose every young fellow has some such ideas. I only made an ass of myself, and I'm glad I'm well out of it. Victoria saved me from that."

But this was long afterward. He died hard, and sometimes he would have moments of strength in his weakness, just as before he had given up his career during a moment of weakness in his strength. During the first years after he had given up his career, he thought he was content with the way things had come to be; but it was not so, and now and then the old feeling, the love of the

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old life, the old ambition, would be stirred into activity again by some sight, or sound, or episode in the conventional life around him. A chance paragraph in a newspaper, a sight of the Arizona deserts of sage and cactus, a momentary panic on a ferryboat, sometimes even fine music or a great poem would wake the better part of him to the desire of doing great things. At such times the longing grew big and troubrous within him to cut loose from it all and get back to those places of the earth where there were neither months nor years, and where the days of the week had no names; where he could feel unknown winds blowing against his face and unnamed mountains rising beneath his feet; where he could see great, sandy, stony stretches of desert with hot blue shadows, and plains of salt, and thickets of jungle grass, broken only by the lairs of beasts and the paths the steinbok make when they go down to water.

The most trifling thing would recall all this to him, just as a couple of notes have recalled to you whole arias and overtures. But with Toppan it was as though one had recalled the arias and the overtures and then was not allowed to sing them.

We went into the arena and sat down. The ring in the middle was fenced in by a great circular iron cage. The tiers of seats rose around this, a band was playing in a box over the entrance, and the whole interior was lighted by an electric globe slung over the middle of the cage.

Inside the cage a brown bear—to me less suggestive of a wild animal than of lap-robés and furriers' signs—was dancing sleepily and allowing himself to be prodded by a person whose celluloid standing-collar showed white at the neck above the green of his Tyrolean costume. The bear was mangy, and his steel muzzle had chafed him, and Toppan said he was corrupted of moth and rust alike, and the audience applauded but feebly when he and his keeper withdrew.

After this we had a clown-elephant, dressed in a bib and tucker and vast baggy breeches—like those of a particularly big French Turco—who had lunch with his keeper, and rang the bell and drank his wine and wiped his mouth with a handkerchief like a bed-quilt, and pulled the chair from underneath his companion, seeming to be amused at it all with a strange sort of suppressed elephantine mirth.

And then, after they had both made their bow and gone out, in bounded and tumbled the dogs, barking and grinning all over, jumping up on their stools and benches, wriggling and pushing one another about, giggling and excited like so many kindergarten children on a show-day. I am sure they enjoyed their performance as much as the audience did, for they never had to be told what to do, and seemed only too eager for their turn to come. The best of it all was that they were quite unconscious of the audience and appeared to do their tricks for the sake of the tricks themselves, and not for the applause which followed them. And then, after the usual programme of wicker cylinders, hoops, and balls was over, they all rushed off amid a furious scrattling of paws and filliping of tails and heels.

While this was going on, we had been hearing from time to time a great sound, half-whine, half-rumbling guttural cough, that came from somewhere behind the exit from the cage. It was repeated at rapidly decreasing intervals, and grew lower in pitch until it ended in a short bass grunt. It sounded cruel and menacing, and when at its full volume the wood of the benches under us thrilled and vibrated.

There was a little pause in the programme while the arena was cleared and new and much larger and heavier paraphernalia was set about, and a gentleman in a frock coat and a very shiny hat entered and announced “the world’s greatest lion-tamer.” Then he

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went away and the tamer came in and stood expectantly by the side of the entrance, there was another short wait, and the band struck a long minor chord.

And then they came in, one after the other, with long, crouching, lurching strides, not at all good humouredly, like the dogs, or the elephant, or even the bear, but with low-hanging heads, surly, watchful, their eyes gleaming with the rage and hate that burned in their hearts and that they dared not vent. Their loose yellow hides rolled and rippled over the great muscles as they moved, and the breath coming from their hot, half-open mouths turned to steam as it struck the air.

A huge, blue-painted see-saw was dragged out to the centre, and the tamer made a sharp sound of command. Slowly, and with twitching tails, two of them obeyed, and clambering upon the balancing-board swung up and down, while the music played a see-saw waltz. And all the while their great eyes flamed with the detestation of the thing and their black upper lips curled away from their long fangs in protest of this hourly renewed humiliation and degradation.

And one of the others, while waiting his turn to be whipped and bullied, sat up on his haunches and faced us and looked far away beyond us over the heads of the audience—over the continent and ocean, as it were—as though he saw something in that quarter that made him forget his present surroundings.

"You grand old brute," muttered Toppan; and then he said: "Do you know what you would see if you were to look into his eyes now? You would see Africa, and unnamed mountains, and great stony stretches of desert, with hot blue shadows, and plains of salt, and lairs in the jungle grass, and lurking places near the paths the steinbok make when they go down to water. But now he's hampered and caged—is there anything worse than a caged lion?—and kept from the life he

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loves and was made for"—just here the tamer spoke sharply to him, and his eyes and crest drooped—"and ruled over," concluded Toppan, "by someone who is not so great as he, who has spoiled what was best in him and has turned his powers to trivial, resultless uses—someone weaker than he, yet stronger. Ah, well, old brute, it was yours once, we will remember that."

They wheeled out a clumsy velocipede, built expressly for him, and, while the lash whistled and snapped about him, the conquered king heaved himself upon it and went around and around the ring, while the band played a quick-step, the audience broke into applause, and the tamer smirked and bobbed his well-oiled head. I thought of Samson performing for the Philistines and Thusnelda at the triumph of Germanicus. The great beasts, grand though conquered, seemed to be the only dignified ones in the whole business. I hated the audience who saw their shame from behind iron bars; I hated myself for being one of them; and I hated the smug, sniggering tamer.

This latter had been drawing out various stools and ladders, and now arranged the lions upon them so they should form a pyramid, with himself on top.

Then he swung himself up among them, with his heels upon their necks, and, taking hold of the jaws of one, wrenched them apart with a great show of strength, turning his head to the audience so that all should see.

And just then the electric light above him cackled harshly, guttered, dropped down to a pencil of dull red, then went out, and the place was absolutely dark.

The band stopped abruptly with a discord, and there was an instant of silence. Then we heard the stools and ladders clattering as the lions leaped down, and straightway four pairs of lambent green spots burned out of the darkness and travelled swiftly about here and there, crossing and recrossing one another like the lights

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of steamers in a storm. Heretofore, the lions had been sluggish and inert; now they were aroused and alert in an instant, and we could hear the swift *pad-pad* of their heavy feet as they swung around the arena and the sound of their great bodies rubbing against the bars of the cage as one and the other passed nearer to us.

I don't think the audience at all appreciated the situation at first, for no one moved or seemed excited, and one shrill voice suggested that the band should play "When the electric lights go out."

"Keep perfectly quiet, please!" called the tamer out of the darkness, and a certain peculiar ring in his voice was the first intimation of a possible danger.

But Toppan knew; and as we heard the tamer fumbling for the catch of the gate, which he somehow could not loose in the darkness, he said, with a rising voice: "He wants to get that gate open pretty quick."

But for their restless movements the lions were quiet; they uttered no sound, which was a bad sign. Blinking and dazed by the garish blue whiteness of a few moments before, they could see perfectly now where the tamer was blind.

"Listen," said Toppan. Near to us, and on the inside of the cage, we could hear a sound as of some slender body being whisked back and forth over the surface of the floor. In an instant I guessed what it was; one of the lions was crouched there, whipping his sides with his tail.

"When he stops that he'll spring," said Toppan excitedly.

"Bring a light, Jerry—quick!" came the tamer's voice.

People were clambering to their feet by this time, talking loud, and we heard a woman cry out.

"Please keep as quiet as possible, ladies and gentlemen!" cried the tamer; "it won't do to excite——"

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From the direction of the voice came the sound of a heavy fall and a crash that shook the iron gratings in their sockets.

"He's got him!" shouted Toppan.

And then what a scene! In that thick darkness everyone sprang up, stumbling over the seats and over each other, all shouting and crying out, suddenly stricken with a panic fear of something they could not see. Inside the barred death-trap every lion suddenly gave tongue at once, until the air shook and sang in our ears. We could hear the great cats hurling themselves against the bars, and could see their eyes leaving brassy streaks against the darkness as they leaped. Two more sprang as the first had done toward that quarter of the cage from which came sounds of stamping and struggling, and then the tamer began to scream.

I think that so long as I shall live I shall not forget the sound of the tamer's scream. He did not scream as a woman would have done, from the head, but from the chest, which sounded so much worse that I was sick from it in a second with that sickness that weakens one at the pit of the stomach and along the muscles at the back of the legs. He did not pause for a second. Every breath was a scream, and every scream was alike, and one heard through it all the long snarls of satisfied hate and revenge, muffled by the man's clothes and the *rip, rip* of the cruel, blunt claws.

Hearing it all in the dark, as we did, made it all the more dreadful. I think for a time I must have taken leave of my senses. I was ready to vomit for the sickness that was upon me, and I beat my hands raw upon the iron bars or clasped them over my ears against the sounds of the dreadful thing that was doing behind them. I remember praying aloud that it might soon be over, so only those screams might be stopped.

It seemed as though it had gone on for hours, when

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some men rushed in with a lantern and long, sharp irons. A hundred voices cried: "Here he is, over here!" and they ran around outside the cage and threw the light of the lantern on a place where a heap of grey, gold-laced clothes writhed and twisted beneath three great bulks of fulvous hide and bristling black mane.

The irons were useless. The three furies dragged their prey out of their reach and crouched over it again and recommenced. No one dared to go into the cage, and still the man lived and struggled and screamed.

I saw Toppan's fingers go to his mouth, and through that medley of dreadful noises there issued a sound that, sick as I was, made me shrink anew and close my eyes and teeth and shudder as though some cold slime had been poured through the hollow of my bones where the marrow should be. It was as the noise of the whistling of a fine whiplash, mingled with the whirr of a locust magnified a hundred times, and ended in an abrupt clacking noise thrice repeated.

At once I remembered where I had heard it before, because, having once heard the hiss of an aroused and angry serpent, no child of Eve can ever forget it.

The sound that now came from between Toppan's teeth and that filled the arena from wall to wall was the sound that I had heard once before in the Paris Jardin des Plantes at feeding-time—the sound made by the great constrictors, when their huge bodies are looped and coiled like a *reata* for the throw that never misses, that never relaxes, and that no beast of the field is built strong enough to withstand. All the filthy wickedness and abominable malice of the centuries since the Enemy first entered into that shape that crawls, was concentrated in that hoarse, whistling hiss—a hiss that was cold and piercing like an icicle-made sound. It was not loud, but had in it some sort of penetrating quality that cut through the waves of horrid sounds about us, as the

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snake-carved prow of a Viking galley might have cut its way through the tumbling eddies of a tide-rip.

At the second repetition the lions paused. None better than they knew what was the meaning of that hiss. They had heard it before in their native hunting-grounds in the earlier days of summer, when the first heat lay close over all the jungle like the hollow of the palm of an angry god. Or if they themselves had not heard it, their sires before them had, and the fear of the thing bred into their bones suddenly leaped to life at the sound and gripped them and held them close.

When for a third time the sound sung and shrilled in their ears, their heads drew between their shoulders, their great eyes grew small and glittering, the hackles rose, and stiffened on their backs, their tails drooped; and they backed slowly to the farther side of the cage and cowered there, whining and beaten.

Toppan wiped the sweat from the inside of his hands and went into the cage with the keepers and gathered up the panting, broken body, with its twitching fingers and dead white face and ears, and carried it out. As they lifted it, the handful of pitiful medals dropped from the shredded grey coat and rattled down upon the floor. In the silence that had now succeeded, it was about the only sound one heard.

As we sat that evening on the porch of Toppan's house, in a fashionable suburb of the city, he said, for the third time: "I had that trick from a Mpongwee headman," and added: "It was while I was at Victoria Falls, waiting to cross the Kalahari Desert."

Then he continued, his eyes growing keener and his manner changing: "There is some interesting work to be done in that quarter by someone. You see, the Kalahari runs like this"—he drew the lines on the ground with his cane—"coming down in something like this

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shape from the Orange River to about the twentieth parallel south. The aneroid gives its average elevation about six hundred feet. I didn't cross it at the time, because we had sickness and the porters cut. But I made a lot of geological observations, and from these I have built up a theory that the Kalahari is no desert at all, but a big, well-watered plateau, with higher ground on the east and west. The tribes, too, thereabout call the place *Linoka-Noka*, and that's the Bantu for rivers upon rivers. They're nasty, though, these Bantu, and gave us a lot of trouble. They have a way of spitting little poisoned thorns into you unawares, and your tongue swells up and turns blue and your teeth fall out and—”

His wife Victoria came out to us in evening dress.

“Ah, Vic,” said Toppan, jumping up, with a very sweet smile, “we were just talking about your paper-german next Tuesday, and I think we might have some very pretty favours made out of white tissue-paper—roses and butterflies, you know.”

“THIS ANIMAL OF A BULDY JONES”

WE COULD always look for fine fighting at Julien’s of a Monday morning, because at that time the model was posed for the week and we picked out the places from which to work. Of course the first ten of the *esquisse* men had first choice. So, no matter how early you got up and how resolutely you held to your first row tabouret, chaps like Rounault, or Marioton, or the little Russian, whom we nicknamed “Choubersky,” or Haushaulder, or the big American—“This Animal of a Buldy Jones”—all strong *esquisse* men, could always chuck you out when they came, which they did about ten o’clock, when everything had quieted down. When two particularly big, quick-tempered, obstinate, and combative men try to occupy, simultaneously, a space twelve inches square, it gives rise to complications. We used to watch and wait for these fights (after we had been chucked out ourselves), and make things worse, and hasten the crises by getting upon the outskirts of the crowd that thronged about the disputants and shoving with all our might. Then one of the disputants would be jostled rudely against the other, who would hit him in the face, and then there would be a wild hooroosh and a clatter of overturned easels and the flashing of whitened knuckles and glimpses of two fierce red faces over the shoulders of the crowd, and everything would be pleasant. Then, perhaps, you would see an allusion in the Paris edition of the next morning’s *Herald* to “the brutal and lawless students.”

I remember particularly one fight—quite the best I

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ever saw at Julien's or elsewhere, for the matter of that. It was between Haushaulder and Gilet. Haushaulder was a Dane, and six feet two. Gilet was French, and had a waist like Virginie's. But Gilet had just come back from his three years' army service, and knew all about the savate. They squared off at each other, Gilet spitting like a cat, and Haushaulder grommelant under his moustache. “This Animal of a Buldy Jones,” the big American, bellowed to separate them, for it really looked like a massacre. And then, all at once, Gilet spun around, bent over till his finger-tips touched the floor, and balancing on the toe, lashed out backwards with his leg at Haushaulder, like any cayuse. The heel of his boot caught the Dane on the point of the chin. An hour and forty minutes later, when Haushaulder recovered consciousness and tried to speak, we found that the tip of his tongue had been sliced off between his teeth as if by a pair of scissors. It was a really unfortunate affair, and the government very nearly closed the atelier because of it. But “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” gave us all his opinion of the savate, and announced that the next man who savated from any cause whatever “aurait affaire avec lui, oui, avec lui, cré nom!”

Heavens! No one *aimerait avoir affaire avec cette animal de Buldy Jones*. He was from Chicago (but, of course, he couldn't help that!), and was taller than even Haushaulder, and much broader. The desire for art had come upon him all of a sudden while he was studying law at Columbia. For “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” had gone into law after leaving Yale. Here we touch his great weakness. He was a Yale man! Why, he was prouder of that fact than he was of being an American, or even a Chicagoan—and that is saying much. Why, he couldn't talk of Yale without his face flushing. Why, Yale was almost more to him than his mother. I remember, at the students' ball at Bullier's, he got the Ameri-

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cans together, and with infinite trouble taught us all the Yale "yell," which he swore was a transcript from Aristophanes, and for three hours he gravely headed a procession that went the rounds of a hall howling "Brek! Kek! Kek! Kek! Co-ex!" and all the rest of it.

More than that, "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" had pitched on his 'varsity baseball nine. In his studio—quite the swellest in the Quarter, by the way—he had a collection of balls that he had pitched in match games at different times, and he used to show them to us reverently, and if we were his especial friends, would allow us to handle them. They were all written over with names and dates. He would explain them to us one by one.

"This one," he would say, "I pitched in the Princeton game, and here's two I pitched in the Harvard game—hard game that—our catcher gave out—guess he couldn't hold me" (with a grin of pride), "and Harvard made it interesting for me until the fifth inning; then I made two men fan out one after the other, and then, just to show 'em what I could do, filled the bases, got three balls called on me, and then pitched two inshoots and an outcurve, just as hard as I could deliver. Printz of Harvard was at the bat. He struck at every one of them—and fanned out. Here's the ball I did it with. Yes, sir. Oh, I can pitch a ball all right."

Now think of that! Here was this man, "This Animal of a Buldy Jones," a Beaux Arts man, one of the best colour and line men on our side, who had three *esquisses* and five figures "on the wall" at Julien's (any Paris art student will know what that means), and yet the one thing he was proud of, the one thing he cared to be admired for, the one thing he loved to talk about, was the fact that he had pitched for the Yale 'varsity baseball nine.

All this by way of introduction.

“ THIS ANIMAL OF A BULDY JONES ”

I wonder how many Julien men there are left who remember the *affaire Camme*? Plenty, I make no doubt, for the thing was a monumental character. I heard Roubault tell it at the “Dead Rat” just the other day. “Choubersky” wrote to “The Young Pretender” that he heard it away in the interior of Morocco, where he had gone to paint doorways, and Adler, who is now on the *Century* staff, says it’s an old story among the illustrators. It had been bandied about so much that there is danger of its original form being lost. Wherefore it is time that it should be brought to print.

Now Camme, be it understood, was a filthy little beast—a thorough-paced, blown-in-the-bottle black-guard with not enough self-respect to keep him sweet through a summer’s day—a rogue, a bug—anything you like that is sufficiently insulting; besides all this, and perhaps because of it, he was a duellist. He loved to have a man slap his face—some huge, big-boned, big-hearted man, who knew no other weapons but his knuckles. Camme would send him his card the next day, with a message to the effect that it would give him great pleasure to try and kill the gentleman in question at a certain time and place. Then there would be a lot of palaver, and somehow the duel would never come off, and Camme’s reputation as a duellist would go up another peg, and the rest of us—beastly little rapins that we were—would hold him in increased fear and increased horror, just as if he were a rattler in coil.

Well, the row began one November morning—a Monday—and, of course, it was over the allotment of seats. Camme had calmly rubbed out the name of “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” from the floor, and had chalked his own in its place.

Now, Bouguereau had placed the *esquisse* of “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” fifth, the precedence over Camme.

"THIS ANIMAL OF A BULDY JONES"

But Camme invented reasons for a different opinion, and presented them to the whole three ateliers at the top of his voice and with unclean allusions. We were all climbing up on the taller stools by this time, and Virginie, who was the model of the week, was making furtive signs at us to give the crowd a push, as was our custom.

Camme was going on at a great rate.

"Ah, farceur! Ah, espèce de voleur, crapaud, va; c'est à moi cette place-là, saligaud; va te prom'ner, va faire des copies au Louvre."

To be told to go and make copies in the Louvre was in our time the last insult. "This Animal of a Buldy Jones," this sometime Yale pitcher, towering above the little frog-like Frenchman, turned to the crowd, and said, in grave concern, his forehead puckered in great deliberation:

"I do not know, precisely, that which it is necessary to do with this kind of a little toad of two legs. I do not know whether I should spank him or administer the good kick of the boot. I believe I shall give him the good kick of the boot. Hein!"

He turned Camme around, held him at arm's length, and kicked him twice severely. Next day, of course, Camme sent his card, and four of us Americans went around to the studio of "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" to have a smoke-talk over it. Robinson was of the opinion to ignore the matter.

"Now, we can't do that," said Adler, "these beastly continentals would misunderstand. Can you shoot, Buldy Jones?"

"Only deer."

"Fence?"

"Not a little bit. Oh, let's go and punch the wadding out of him, and be done with it!"

"No! No! He should be humiliated."

“‘THIS ANIMAL OF A BULDY JONES’”

“I tell you what—let’s guy the thing.”

“Get up a fake duel and make him seem ridiculous.”

“You’ve got the choice of weapons, Buldy Jones.”

“Fight him with hat-pins.”

“Oh, let’s go punch the wadding out of him—he makes me tired.”

“Horse” Wilson, who hadn’t spoken, suddenly broke in with:

“Now, listen to me, you other fellows. Let me fix this thing. Buldy Jones, I must be one of your seconds.”

“*Soit!*”

“I’m going to Camme, and say like this: ‘This Animal of a Buldy Jones’ has the naming of weapons. He comes from a strange country, near the Mississippi, from a place called Shee-ka-go, and there it is not considered etiquette to fight either with a sword or pistol; it is too common. However, when it is necessary that balls should be exchanged in order to satisfy honour, a curious custom is resorted to. Balls are exchanged, but not from pistols. They are very terrible balls, large as an apple, and of adamantine hardness. ‘This Animal of a Buldy Jones,’ even now has a collection. No American gentleman of honour travels without them. He would gladly have you come and make first choice of a ball while he will select one from among those you leave. *Sur le terrain*, you will deliver these balls simultaneously toward each other, repeating till one or the other adversary drops. Then honour can be declared satisfied.”

“Yes, and do you suppose that Camme will listen to such tommy rot as that?” remarked “This Animal of a Buldy Jones.” “I think I’d better just punch his head.”

“Listen to it? Of course he’ll listen to it. You’ve no idea what curious ideas these continentals have of the American duel. You can’t propose anything so absurd in the duelling line that they won’t give it serious

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thought. And besides, if Camme won't fight this way we'll tell him that you will have a Mexican duel."

"What's that?"

"Tie your left wrists together, and fight with knives in your right hand. That'll scare the tar out of him."

And it did. The seconds had a meeting at the café of the Moulin Rouge, and gave Camme's seconds the choice of the duel Yale or the duel Mexico. Camme had no wish to tie himself to a man with a knife in his hands, and his seconds came the next day and solemnly chose a league ball—one that had been used against the Harvard nine.

Will I—will any of us ever forget that duel? Camme and his people came upon the ground almost at the same time as we. It was behind the mill of Longchamps course. Roubault was one of Camme's seconds, and he carried the ball in a lacquered Japanese tobacco-jar—gingerly as if it were a bomb. We were quick getting to work. Camme and "This Animal of a Buldy Jones" were each to take his baseball in his hand, stand back to back, walk away from each other just the distance between the pitcher's box and the home plate (we had seen to that), turn on the word, and—deliver their balls.

"How do you feel?" I whispered to our principal, as I passed the ball into his hands.

"I feel just as if I was going into a match game, with the bleachers full to the top and the boys hitting her up for Yale. We ought to give the yell, y' know."

"How's the ball?"

"A bit soft and not quite round. Bernard of the Harvard nine hit the shape out of it in a drive over our left field, but it'll do all right."

"This Animal of a Buldy Jones" bent and gathered up a bit of dirt, rubbed the ball in it, and ground it between his palms. The man's arms were veritable connecting-rods, and were strung with tendons like particu-

“‘THIS ANIMAL OF A BULDY JONES’”

larly well-seasoned rubber. I remembered what he said about few catchers being able to hold him, and I recalled the pads and masks, and wadded gloves of a base-ball game, and I began to feel nervous. If Camme was hit on the temple or over the heart—

“Now, say, old man, go slow, you know. We don’t want to fetch up in Mazas for this. By the way, what kind of ball are you going to give him? What’s the curve?”

“I don’t know yet. Maybe I’ll let him have an up-shoot. Never make up my mind till the last moment.”

“All ready, gentlemen!” said Roubault, coming up.

Camme had removed coat, vest, and cravat. “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” stripped to a sleeveless under-shirt. He spat on his hands, and rubbed a little more dirt on the ball.

“Play ball!” he muttered.

We set them back to back. On the word they paced from each other and paused. “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” shifted his ball to his right hand, and, holding it between his fingers, slowly raised both his arms high above his head and a little over one shoulder. With his toe he made a little depression in the soil, while he slowly turned the ball between his fingers.

“Fire!” cried “Horse” Wilson.

On the word “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” turned abruptly about on one foot, one leg came high off the ground till the knee nearly touched the chest—you know the movement and position well—the uncanny contortions of a pitcher about to deliver.

Camme threw his ball overhand—bowled it as is done in cricket, and it went wide over our man’s shoulder. Down came Buldy Jones’ foot, and his arm shot forward with a tremendous jerk. Not till the very last moment did he glance at his adversary or measure the distance.

“THIS ANIMAL OF A BULDY JONES”

“It is an in-curve!” exclaimed “Horse” Wilson in my ear.

We could hear the ball whir as it left a grey blurred streak in the air. Camme made as if to dodge it with a short toss of head and neck—it was all he had time for—and the ball, faithful to the last twist of the pitcher’s fingers, swerved sharply inward at the same moment and in the same direction.

When we got to Camme and gathered him up, I veritably believed that the fellow had been done for. For he lay as he had fallen, straight as a ramrod and quite as stiff, and his eyes were winking like the shutter of a kinetoscope. But “This Animal of a Buldy Jones,” who had seen prize-fighters knocked out by a single blow, said it was all right. An hour later Camme woke up and began to mumble in pain through his clenched teeth, for the ball, hitting him on the point of the chin, had dislocated his jaw.

The heart-breaking part of the affair came afterward, when “This Animal of a Buldy Jones” kept us groping in the wet grass and underbrush until after dark looking for his confounded baseball, which had caromed off Camme’s chin, and gone—no one knows where.

We never found it.

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YOUNG Overbeck's father was editor and proprietor of the county paper in Colfax, California, and the son, so soon as his high-school days were over, made his appearance in the office as his father's assistant. So abrupt was the transition that his diploma, which was to hang over the editorial desk, had not yet returned from the framer's, while the first copy that he was called on to edit was his own commencement oration on the philosophy of Dante. He had worn a white piqué cravat and a cutaway coat on the occasion of its delivery, and the county commissioner, who was the guest of honour on the platform, had congratulated him as he handed him his sheepskin. For Overbeck was the youngest and the brightest member of his class.

Colfax was a lively town in those days. The teaming from the valley over into the mining country on the other side of the Indian River was at its height then. Colfax was the headquarters of the business, and the teamsters—after the long pull up from the Indian River Cañon—showed interest in an environment made up chiefly of saloons.

Then there were the mining camps over by Iowa Hill, the Morning Star, the Big Dipper, and farther on, up in the Gold Run country, the Little Providence. There was Dutch Flat, full of Mexican-Spanish girls and "breed" girls, where the dance halls were of equal number with the bars. There was—a little way down the line—Clipper Gap, where the mountain ranches began, and where the mountain cowboy lived up to the traditions of his kind.

And this life, tumultuous, headstrong, vivid in colour, vigorous in action, was bound together by the railroad, which not only made a single community out of all that part of the east slope of the Sierras' foot-hills, but contributed its own life as well—the life of oilers, engineers, switchmen, eating-house waitresses and cashiers, "lady" operators, conductors, and the like.

Of such a little world news-items are evolved—sometimes even scare-head, double-leaded descriptive articles—supplemented by interviews with sheriffs and ante-mortem statements. Good grist for a county paper; good opportunities for an unspoiled, observant, imaginative young fellow at the formative period of his life. Such was the time, such the environment, such the conditions that prevailed when young Overbeck, at the age of twenty-one, sat down to the writing of his first novel.

He completed it in five months, and, though he did not know the fact then, the novel was good. It was not great—far from it, but it was not merely clever. Somehow, by a miracle of good fortune, young Overbeck had got started right at the very beginning. He had not been influenced by a fetich of his choice till his work was a mere replica of some other writer's. He was not literary. He had not much time for books. He lived in the midst of a strenuous, eager life, a little primal even yet; a life of passions that were often elemental in their simplicity and directness. His schooling and his newspaper work—it was he who must find or ferret out the news all along the line, from Penrhyn to Emigrant Gap—had taught him observation without—here was the miracle—dulling the edge of his sensitiveness. He saw, as those few, few people see who live close to life at the beginning of an epoch. He saw into the life and the heart beneath the life; the life and the heart of Bunt Mc-

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Bride, as with eight horses and much abjuration he negotiated a load of steel "stamps" up the sheer leap of the Indian Cañon; he saw into the life and into the heart of Irma Tejada, who kept case for the faro players at Dutch Flat; he saw into the life and heart of Lizzie Toby, the biscuit-shooter in the railway eating-house, and into the life and heart of "Doc" Twitchel, who had degrees from Edinburgh and Leipsic, and who, for obscure reasons, chose to look after the measles, sprains, and rheumatisms of the countryside.

And, besides, there were others and still others, whom young Overbeck learned to know to the very heart of them: blacksmiths, travelling peddlers, section-bosses, miners, horse-wranglers, cow-punchers, the stage-drivers, the storekeeper, the hotel-keeper, the ditch-tender, the prospector, the seamstress of the town, the postmistress, the schoolmistress, the poetess. Into the lives of these and the hearts of these young Overbeck saw, and the wonder of that sight so overpowered him that he had no thought and no care for other people's books. And he was only twenty-one! Only twenty-one, and yet he saw clearly into the great, complicated, confused human machine that clashed and jarred around him. Only twenty-one, and yet he read the enigma that men of fifty may alone hope to solve! Once in a great while this thing may happen—in such out-of-the-way places as that country around Colfax in Placer County, California, where no outside influences have play, where books are few and misprized and the reading circle a thing unknown. From time to time such men are born, especially along the line of cleavage where the farthest skirmish line of civilization thrusts and girds at the wilderness. A very few find their true profession before the fire is stamped out of them; of these few, fewer still have the force to make themselves heard. Of these last the majority die before they attain

the faculty of making their message intelligible. Those that remain are the world's great men.

At the time when his first little book was on its initial journey to the Eastern publishing houses, Overbeck was by no means a great man. The immaturity that was yet his, the lack of knowledge of his tools, clogged his work and befogged his vision. The smooth running of the cogs and the far-darting range of vision would come in the course of the next fifteen years of unrelenting persistence. The ordering and organizing and controlling of his machine he could, with patience and by taking thought, accomplish for himself. The original impetus had come straight from the almighty gods. That impetus was young yet, feeble yet, coming down from so far it was spent by the time it reached the earth—at Colfax, California. A touch now might divert it. Judge with what care such a thing should be nursed and watched; compared with the delicacy with which it unfolds, the opening of a rosebud is an abrupt explosion. Later on, such insight, such undeveloped genius may become a tremendous world-power, a thing to split a nation in twain as the axe cleaves the block. But at twenty-one, a whisper—and it takes flight; a touch—it withers; the lifting of a finger—it is gone.

The same destiny that had allowed Overbeck to be born, and that thus far had watched over his course, must have inspired his choice, his very first choice, of a publisher, for the manuscript of *The Vision of Bunt McBride* went straight as a home-bound bird to the one man of all others who could understand the beginnings of genius and recognize the golden grain of truth in the chaff of unessentials. His name was Conant, and he accepted the manuscript by telegram.

He did more than this, and one evening Overbeck stood on the steps of the post-office and opened a letter

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in his hand, and, looking up and off, saw the world transfigured. His chance had come. In half a year of time he had accomplished what other men—other young writers—strive for throughout the best years of their youth. He had been called to New York. Conant had offered him a minor place on his editorial staff.

Overbeck reached the great city a fortnight later, and the cutaway coat and piqué cravat—unworn since Commencement—served to fortify his courage at the first interview with the man who was to make him—so he believed—famous.

Ah, the delights, the excitement, the inspiration of that day! Let those judge who have striven toward the Great City through years of deferred hope and heart sinkings and sacrifice daily renewed. Overbeck's feet were set in those streets whose names had become legendary to his imagination. Public buildings and public squares familiar only through the weekly prints defiled before him like a pageant, but friendly for all that, inviting, even. But the vast conglomerate life that roared by his ears, like the systole and diastole of an almighty heart, was for a moment disquieting. Soon the human resemblance faded. It became as a machine infinitely huge, infinitely formidable. It challenged him with superb condescension.

"I must down you," he muttered, as he made his way toward Conant's, "or you will down me." He saw it clearly. There was no other alternative. The young boy in his foolish finery of a Colfax tailor's make, with no weapons but such wits as the gods had given him, was pitted against the leviathan.

There was no friend nearer than his native state on the other fringe of the continent. He was fearfully alone.

But he was twenty-one. The wits that the gods had given him were good, and the fine fire that was

within him, the radiant freshness of his nature, stirred and leaped to life at the challenge. Ah, he would win, he would win! And in his exuberance, the first dim consciousness of his power came to him. He could win, he had it in him; he began to see that now. That nameless power was his which would enable him to grip this monstrous life by the very throat, and bring it down on its knee before him to listen respectfully to what he had to say.

The interview with Conant was no less exhilarating. It was in the reception-room of the great house that it took place, and while waiting for Conant to come in, Overbeck, his heart in his mouth, recognized, in the original drawings on the walls, picture after picture, signed by famous illustrators, that he had seen reproduced in Conant's magazine.

Then Conant himself had appeared and shaken the young author's hand a long time, and had talked to him with the utmost kindness of his book, of his plans for the immediate future, of the work he would do in the editorial office and of the next novel he wished him to write.

"We'll only need you here in the mornings," said the editor, "and you can put in your afternoons on your novel. Have you anything in mind as good as *Bunt McBride*?"

"I have a sort of notion for one," hazarded the young man; and Conant had demanded to hear it.

Stammering, embarrassed, Overbeck outlined it.

"I see, I see!" Conant commented. "Yes, there is a good story in that. Maybe Hastings will want to use it in the monthly. But we'll make a book of it, anyway, if you work it up as well as the McBride story."

And so the young fellow made his first step in New York. The very next day he began his second novel.

In the editorial office, where he spent his mornings reading proof and making up "front matter," he made the acquaintance of a middle-aged lady, named Miss Patten, who asked him to call on her, and later on introduced him into the "set" wherein she herself moved. The set called itself the "New Bohemians," and once a week met at Miss Patten's apartment uptown. In a month's time Overbeck was a fixture in "New Bohemia."

It was made up of minor poets whose opportunity in life was the blank space on a magazine page below the end of an article; of men past their prime, who, because of an occasional story in a second-rate monthly, were considered to have "arrived"; of women who translated novels from the Italian and Hungarian; of decayed dramatists who could advance unimpeachable reasons for the non-production of their plays; of novelists whose books were declined by publishers because of professional jealousy on the part of the "readers," or whose ideas, stolen by false friends, had appeared in books that sold by the hundreds of thousands. In public the New Bohemians were fulsome in the praise of one another's productions. Did a sonnet called, perhaps, "A Cryptogram Is Stella's Soul" appear in a current issue, they fell on it with eager eyes, learned it by heart, and recited lines of it aloud; the conceit of the lover translating the cipher by the key of love was welcomed with transports of delight.

"Ah, one of the most exquisitely delicate allegories I've ever heard, and so true—so 'in the tone'!"

Did a certain one of the third-rate novelists, reading aloud from his unpublished manuscript, say of his heroine: "It was the native catholicity of his temperament that lent strength and depth to her innate womanliness," the phrase was snapped up on the instant.

"How he understands women!"

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"Such *finesse*! More subtle than Henry James."

"Paul Bourget has gone no further," said one of the critics of New Bohemia; "our limitations are determined less by our renunciations than by our sense of proportion in our conception of ethical standards."

The set abased itself. "Wonderful, ah, how pitilessly you fathom our poor human nature!" New Bohemia saw colour in word effects. A poet read aloud:

"The stalwart rain!
Ah, the rush of down-toppling waters;
The torrent!
Merge of mist and musky air;
The current
Sweeps thwart my blinded sight again."

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the audience, "see, see that bright green flash!"

Thus in public. In private all was different. Walking home with one or another of the set, young Overbeck heard their confidences.

"Keppler is a good fellow right enough, but, my goodness, he can't write verse!"

"That thing of Miss Patten's to-night! Did you ever hear anything so unconvincing, so obvious? Poor old woman!"

"I'm really sorry for Martens; awfully decent sort, but he never should try to write novels."

By rapid degrees young Overbeck caught the lingo of the third-raters. He could talk about "tendencies" and the "influence of reactions." Such and such a writer had a "sense of form," another a "feeling for word effects." He knew all about "tones" and "notes" and "philistinisms." He could tell the difference between an allegory and a simile as far as he could see them. An anti-climax was the one unforgivable sin under heaven. A mixed metaphor made him wince, and a split infinitive hurt him like a blow.

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But the great word was "convincing." To say a book was convincing was to give positively the last verdict. To be "unconvincing" was to be shut out from the elect. If the New Bohemian decided that the last popular book was unconvincing, there was no appeal. The book was not to be mentioned in polite conversation.

And the author of *The Vision of Bunt McBride*, as yet new to the world as the day he was born, with all his eager ambition and quick sensitiveness, thought that all this was the real thing. He had never so much as seen literary people before. How could he know the difference? He honestly believed that New Bohemia was the true literary force of New York. He wrote home that the association with such people, thinkers, poets, philosophers, was an inspiration; that he had learned more in one week in their company than he had learned in Colfax in a whole year.

Perhaps, too, it was the flattery he received that helped to carry Overbeck off his feet. The New Bohemians made a little lion of him when *Bunt McBride* reached its modest pinnacle of popularity. They kowtowed to him, and toadied to him, and fagged and tooted for him, and spoke of his book as a masterpiece. They said he had succeeded where Kipling had ignominiously failed. They said there was more harmony of prose effects in one chapter of *Bunt McBride* than in everything that Bret Harte ever wrote. They told him he was a second Stevenson—only with more refinement.

Then the women of the set, who were of those who did not write, who called themselves "mere diletantes," but who "took an interest in young writers" and liked to influence their lives and works, began to flutter and buzz around him. They told him that they understood him; that they understood his temperament;

that they could see where his forte lay; and they undertook his education.

There was in *The Vision of Bunt McBride* a certain sane and healthy animalism that hurt nobody, and that, no doubt, Overbeck, in later books, would modify. He had taken life as he found it to make his book; it was not his fault that the teamsters, biscuit-shooters, and "breed" girls of the foothills were coarse in fibre. In his sincerity he could not do otherwise in his novel than paint life as he saw it. He had dealt with it honestly; he did not dab at the edge of the business; he had sent his fist straight through it.

But the New Bohemians could not abide this.

"Not so much *faroucherie*, you dear young Lochinvar!" they said. "Art must uplift. 'Look thou not down, but up toward uses of a cup';" and they supplemented the quotation by lines from Walter Pater, and read to him from Ruskin and Matthew Arnold.

Ah, the spiritual was the great thing. We were here to make the world brighter and better for having lived in it. The passions of a waitress in a railway eating-house—how sordid the subject! Dear boy, look for the soul, strive to rise to higher planes! Tread upward; every book should leave a clean taste in the mouth, should tend to make one happier, should elevate, not debase.

So by degrees Overbeck began to see his future in a different light. He began to think that he really had succeeded where Kipling had failed; that he really was Stevenson with more refinement, and that the one and only thing lacking in his work was soul. He believed that he must strive for the spiritual, and "let the ape and tiger die." The originality and unconventionality of his little book he came to regard as crudities.

"Yes," he said one day to Miss Patten and a couple of his friends, "I have been re-reading my book of late.

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I can see its limitations—now. It has a lack of form; the tonality is a little false. It fails somehow to convince."

Thus the first winter passed. In the mornings Overbeck assiduously edited copy and made up front matter on the top floor of the Conant building. In the evenings he called on Miss Patten, or some other member of the set. Once a week, uptown, he fed fat on the literary delicatessen that New Bohemia provided. In the meantime, every afternoon, from luncheon-time till dark, he toiled on his second novel, *Renunciations*. The environment of *Renunciations* was a far cry from Colfax, California. It was a city-bred story, with no fresher atmosphere than that of bought flowers. Its *dramatis personæ* were all of the leisure class, opera-goers, intriguers, riders of blood horses, certainly more refined than Lizzie Toby, biscuit-shooter, certainly more *spirituelle* than Irma Tejada, case-keeper in Dog Omahone's faro joint, certainly more elegant than Bunt McBride, teamster of the Colfax Iowa Hill Freight Transportation Company.

From time to time, as the novel progressed, he read it to the dilettante women whom he knew best among the New Bohemians. They advised him as to its development, and "influenced" its outcome and dénouement.

"I think you have found your *métier*, dear boy," said one of them, when *Renunciations* was nearly completed. "To portray the concrete—is it not a small achievement, sublimated journalese, nothing more? But to grasp abstractions, to analyze a woman's soul, to evoke the spiritual essence in humanity, as you have done in your ninth chapter of *Renunciations*—that is the true function of art. *Je vous fais mes compliments*. *Renunciations* is a *chef-d'œuvre*. Can't you see yourself what a stride you have made, how much broader your outlook has become, how much more catholic, since the days of *Bunt McBride*?"

To be sure, Overbeck could see it. Ah, he was growing, he was expanding. He was mounting higher planes. He was more—catholic. That, of all words, was the one to express his mood. Catholic, ah, yes, he was catholic!

When *Renunciations* was finished he took the manuscript to Conant and waited a fortnight in an agony of suspense and repressed jubilation for the great man's verdict. He was all the more anxious to hear it because, every now and then, while writing the story, doubts—distressing, perplexing—had intruded. At times and all of a sudden, after days of the steadiest footing, the surest progress, the story—the whole set and trend of the affair—would seem, as it were, to escape from his control. Where once, in *Bunt McBride*, he had gripped, he must now grope. What was it? He had been so sure of himself, with all the stimulus of new surroundings, the work in this second novel should have been all the easier. But the doubt would fade, and for weeks he would plough on, till again, and all unexpectedly, he would find himself in an agony of indecision as to the outcome of some vital pivotal episode of the story. Of two methods of treatment, both equally plausible, he could not say which was the true, which the false; and he must needs take, as it were, a leap in the dark—it was either that or abandoning the story, trusting to mere luck that he would, somehow, be carried through.

A fortnight after he had delivered the manuscript to Conant he presented himself in the publisher's office.

"I was just about to send for you," said Conant. "I finished your story last week."

There was a pause. Overbeck settled himself comfortably in his chair, but his nails were cutting his palms.

"Hastings has read it, too—and—well, frankly, Overbeck, we were disappointed."

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"Yes?" inquired Overbeck calmly. "H'm—that's too b-bad."

He could not hear, or at least could not understand, just what the publisher said next. Then, after a time that seemed immeasurably long, he caught the words:

"It would not do you a bit of good, my boy, to have us publish it—it would harm you. There are a good many things I would lie about, but books are not included. This *Renunciations* of yours is—is, why, confound it, Overbeck, it's foolishness."

Overbeck went out and sat on a bench in a square near by, looking vacantly at a fountain as it rose and fell and rose again with an incessant cadenced splashing. Then he took himself home to his hall bedroom. He had brought the manuscript of his novel with him, and for a long time he sat at his table listlessly turning the leaves, confused, stupid, all but inert. The end, however, did not come suddenly. A few weeks later *Renunciations* was published, but not by Conant. It bore the imprint of an obscure firm in Boston. The covers were of limp dressed leather, olive-green, and could be tied together by thongs, like a portfolio. The sale stopped after five hundred copies had been ordered, and the real critics, those who did not belong to New Bohemia, hardly so much as noticed the book.

In the autumn, when the third-raters had come back from their vacations, the "evenings" at Miss Patten's were resumed, and Overbeck hurried to the very first meeting. He wanted to talk it all over with them. In his chagrin and cruel disappointment he was hungry for some word of praise, of condolment. He wanted to be told again, even though he had begun to suspect many things, that he had succeeded where Kipling had failed, that he was Stevenson with more refinement.

But the New Bohemians, the same women and fakirs and half-baked minor poets who had "influenced"

him and had ruined him, could hardly find time to notice him now. The guest of the evening was a new little lion who had joined the set. A symbolist versifier who wrote over the pseudonym of de la Houssaye, with black oily hair and long white hands; him the Bohemians thronged about in crowds as before they had thronged about Overbeck. Only once did any one of them pay attention to the latter. This was the woman who had nicknamed him "Young Lochinvar." Yes, she had read *Renunciations*, a capital little thing, a little thin in parts, lacking in *finesse*. He must strive for his true medium of expression, his true note. Ah, art was long! Study of the new symbolists would help him. She would beg him to read Monsieur de la Houssaye's *The Monoliths*. Such subtlety, such delicious word-chords! It could not fail to inspire him.

Shouldered off, forgotten, the young fellow crept back to his little hall bedroom and sat down to think it over. There in the dark of the night his eyes were opened, and he saw, at last, what these people had done to him; saw the Great Mistake, and that he had wasted his substance.

The golden apples, that had been his for the stretching of the hand, he had flung from him. Tricked, trapped, exploited, he had prostituted the great good thing that had been his by right divine, for the privilege of eating husks with swine. Now was the day of the mighty famine, and the starved and broken heart of him, crying out for help, found only a farrago of empty phrases.

He tried to go back; he did, in very fact, go back to the mountains and the canyons of the great Sierras. "He arose and went to his father," and, with such sapped and broken strength as New Bohemia had left him, strove to wrest some wreckage from the dying fire.

But the ashes were cold by now. The fire that the

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gods had allowed him to snatch, because he was humble and pure and clean and brave, had been stamped out beneath the feet of minor and dilettante poets, and now the gods guarded close the brands that yet remained on the altars.

They may not be violated twice, those sacred fires. Once in a lifetime the very young and the pure in heart may see the shine of them and pluck a brand from the altar's edge. But, once possessed, it must be watched with a greater vigilance than even that of the gods, for its light will live only for him who snatched it first. Only for him that shields it, even with his life, from the contact of the world does it burst into a burning and a shining light. Let once the touch of alien fingers disturb it, and there remains only a little heap of bitter ashes.

GRETTIR AT DRANGEY

I

HOW GRETTIR CAME TO THE ISLAND

A LONG slant of rain came from out the northwest, and much fog; and the sea, still swollen by the last of the winter gales—now two days gone—raced by the bows of their boat in great swells, quiet, huge.

It was cold, and the wind, like a hound at fault, hunted along through the gorges between the wave heads, casting back and forth swiftly in bulging, sounding blasts that made an echo between the walls of water. At times the wind discovered the boat and leaped upon it suddenly with a gush of fierce noise, clutching at the sail and bearing it down as the dog bears down the young elk.

The sky, a vast reach of broken grey, slid along close overhead, sometimes even dropping flat upon the sea, blotting the horizon and whirling about like geyser mist or the reek and smoke from the mouth of *jokuls*. Then, perhaps, out of the fog and out of the rain, suddenly great and fearful came towering and dipping a mighty berg, the waves breaking like surf about its base, spires of grey ice lifting skywards, all dripping and gashed and jagged; knobs and sharp ridges thrusting from under beneath the water, full of danger to ships. At such moments they must put the helm over quickly, sheering off from the colossus before it caught and trampled them.

But no living thing did they see through all the day.

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Sea birds there were none; no porpoises played about the boat, no seals barked from surge to surge. There was nothing but the silent gallop of the waves, the flitting of the leaden sky, the uneven panting of the wind, and the rattle of the rain on the half-frozen sail. The sea was very lonely, barren, empty of all life.

Toward the middle of the day, when Iceland lay far behind them—a bar of black on the ocean's edge—they were little by little aware of the roll and thunder of breakers, and the cries and calls of very many sea birds and—very faint—the bleating of sheep. The fog and the scud of rain and the spindrift that the wind whipped from off the wavetops shut out all sight beyond the cast of a spear. But they knew that they must be driving hard upon the island, and Grettir, from his place at the helm, bent himself to look under the curve of the sail. He called to Illugi, his brother, and to Noise, the thrall, who stood peering at the bows of the boat (their eyes made small to pierce the mist), to know if they saw aught of the island.

"I see," answered Illugi, "only wrack and drift of wreck and streamers of kelp, but we are close upon it."

Then all at once Grettir threw the boat up into the wind, and shouted aloud:

"Look overhead! Quick! Above there! We are indeed close."

And for all that the foot and mid-most part of the island were unseen because of the mist, there, far above them, between sea and sky, looming, as it were, out of heaven, rose suddenly the front of the cliff, rearing the forehead of it, high from out all that din of surf and swirl of mist and rain, bare to the buffet of storms, iron-strong, everlasting, a mighty rock.

They lowered the sail and ran out the sweeps, and for an hour skirted the edge of the island searching for

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the landing-place, where the rope-ladder hung from the cliff's edge. When they had found it, they turned the nose of the boat landward, and, caught by the set of the surf, were drawn inwards, and at last flung up on the beaches. Waist-deep in the icy undertow, they ran the boat up and made her fast, rejoicing that they had won to land without ill-fortune.

The wind for an instant tore in twain the veils of fog, and they saw the black cliff towering above them, as well as the ladder that hung from its summit clattering against the rock as the wind dashed it to and fro, and as they turned from the boat to look about them, lo, at their feet, stranded at make of the ebb, a great walrus, crushed between two ice-floes, lay dead, the rime of the frost encrusting its barbels.

So Grettir Asmundson, called The Strong, outlawed throughout Iceland, came with his brother Illugi, and the thrall Noise, to live on the Island of Drangey.

II

HOW GRETTIR AND ILLUGI HIS BROTHER KEPT THE ISLAND

On top of the cliff (to be reached only by climbing the rope-ladder) were sheep-walks, where the shepherds from the mainland kept their flocks. Grettir and Illugi took over these, for food and for the sake of their pelts which were to make them coverings. They built themselves a house out of the driftwood that came ashore at the foot of the cliff with every tide, and throughout the rest of the winter days lived in peace.

But in the early spring a fisherman carried the news to the mainland that he had seen men on the top of Drangey, and that the ladder was up.

Forthwith came the farmers and the shepherds in

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their boats to know if such was the truth. They found, indeed, the ladder up, and after calling and shouting a long time, brought the hero and his brother to the cliff's edge.

"What now?" they cried. "Give a reckoning of our sheep. Is it peace or war between you and us? Why have you come to our island? Answer, Grettir—outlaw."

"What I have, I hold," called Grettir. "Outlawed I am, indeed, and no man is there in all Iceland that dare help me to home or hiding. Mine is the Island of Drangey, and mine are the sheep and the goats."

"Robber!" shouted the shepherds, "since when have you bought the island? Show the title."

For answer Grettir drew his sword from its sheath, and held it high.

"That is my title," he cried. "When that you shall take from me, the Island of Drangey is yours again."

"At least render up our sheep," answered the shepherds.

"What I have said, I have said!" cried Grettir, and with that he and Illugi drew back from the cliff's edge and were no more seen.

The shepherds sailed back to the mainland, and could think of no way of ridding the island of Grettir and his brother.

The summer waned, and finding themselves no further along than at the beginning, they struck hands with a certain Thorbjorn, called The Hook, and sold him their several claims.

So it came about that Thorbjorn the Hook was also an enemy of Grettir, for he swore that foul or fair, ill or well, he would have the head of the hero, and the price that was upon it, as well as the sheepwalks and herds of Drangey.

This Thorbjorn had an old foster-mother named Thurid, who, although the law of Christ had long since

prevailed through all the country, still made witchcraft, and by this means promised The Hook that he should have the island, and with it the heads of Illugi and Grettir. She herself was a mumbling, fumbling carline of a sour spirit and fierce temper. Once when The Hook and his brother were at tail-game, she, looking over his shoulder, taunted him because he had made a bad move. On his answering in surly fashion, she caught up one of the pieces, and drove the tail of it so fiercely against his eye that the ball had started from the socket. He had sprung up with a mighty oath, and dealt her so strong a blow that she had taken to her bed a month, and thereafterward must walk with a stick. There was no love lost between the two.

Meanwhile, Grettir and Illugi lived in peace upon the top of Drangey. Illugi was younger than the hero; a fine lad with yellow hair and blue eyes. The brothers loved each other, and could not walk or sit together, but that the arm of one was about the shoulder of the other. The lad knew very well that neither he nor Grettir would ever leave Drangey alive; but in spite of that he abode on the island, and was happy in the love and comradeship of his older brother. As for Grettir, hunted and hustled from Norway to Skaptar Jokul, he could trust Illugi only. The thrall Noise was meet for little but to gather driftwood to feed the fire. But Illugi, of all men in the world, Grettir had chosen to stay at his side in this, the last stand of his life, and to bear him company in the night when he waked and was afraid.

For the weird that the Vampire had laid upon Grettir, when he had fought with him through the night at Thorhall-stead, lay heavy upon him. As the Vampire had said, his strength was never greater than at the moment when, spent and weary with the grapple, he had turned the monster under him; and, moreover, as the dead man had foretold, the eyes of him—the

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sightless, lightless dead eyes of him—grew out of the darkness in the late watches of the night, and stared at Grettir whichever way he turned.

For a long time all went well with the two. Bleak though it was, the brothers grew to love the Island of Drangey. Not all the days were so bitter as the one that witnessed their arrival. Throughout the summer—when the daylight lengthened and lengthened, till at last the sun never set at all—the weather held fair. The crust of soil on the top of the great rock grew green and brilliant with gorse and moss and mangel-wurzel. Blackberries flourished on southern exposures and in crevices between the boulders, and wild thyme and heather bloomed and billowed in the sea wind.

Day after day the brothers walked the edge of the cliff, making the rounds of the snares they had set for sea fowl. Day after day, descending to the beaches, they fished in the offing or with ready spears crept from rock to rock, stalking the great bull-walruses that made the land to sun themselves. Day after day in a cloudless sky the sun shone; day after day the sea, deep blue, coruscated and flashed in his light; day after day the wind blew free, the flowers spread, and the surf shouted hoarsely on the beaches, and the sea fowl clamoured, cried, and rose and fell in glinting hordes. The air was full of the fine, clean aroma of the ocean, even the perfume of the flowers was crossed with a tang of salt, and the seaweed at low tide threw off, under the heat of the sun, a warm, sweet redolence of its own.

It was a brave life. They were no man's men. The lonely, rock-ribbed island, the grass, the growths of green, the blue sea, and the blessed sunlight were their friends, their helpers; they held what of the world they saw in fief. They made songs to the morning, and sang them on the cliff's edge, looking off over the sea beneath, standing on a point of rock, the wind in their faces, the

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taste of salt in their mouths, their long braids of yellow hair streaming from their foreheads

They made songs to their swords, and swung the ponderous blades in cadence as they sang—wild, unrhymed, metrical chants, monotonous, turning upon but few notes; savage songs, full of man-slayings and death-fights against great odds, shouted out in deep-toned, male voices, there, far above the world, on that airy, wind-swept, lonely rock. A brave life!

The end they knew must come betimes. They were in nowise afraid. They made a song to their death—the song they would sing when they had turned Berserk in the crash of swords, when the great grey blades were rising and falling, death, like lightning, leaping from their edges; when shield rasped shield, and the spears sank home and wrenched out the life in a spurt of scarlet and the massive axes rang upon helmet and hauberk, and men, heroes all, met death with a cheer, and went out into the Dark with a shout. A brave life!

III

OF THE WEIRD OF THURID, FOSTER-MOTHER TO THORBJORN HOOK

Twice during that summer The Hook made attempts to secure the island. Once he sailed over to Drangey, and standing up in the prow of his boat near the beach, close by where the ladder hung, talked long with Grettrir, who came to the rim of the cliff in answer to his shouts. He promised the Outlaw (so only that he would yield up the island) full possession of half the sheep that yet remained and a free passage in one of his ships to any port within fifty leagues. But the hero had but one answer to all persuadings.

“Drangey is mine,” he said. “There is no rede

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whereby you can get me hence. Here do I bide, whatso may come to hand, to the day of my death and my undoing," and The Hook must sail home in evil mind, gnawing his nails in his fury, and vowing that he would yet gain the island and lay Grettir to earth, and get the best out of the bad bargain he had made.

Another time The Hook hired a man named Hœring, a great climber, to try, by night, to scale the hinder side of Drangey where the cliff was not so bold. But half-way up the man lost either his wits or his footing, for he fell dreadfully upon the rocks far below, and brake the neck of him, so that the spine drove through the skin.

And after that, certainly Grettir and Illugi were let alone. The fame of them and of their seizure of Drangey and the blood feud between them and Thorbjorn, called The Hook, went wide through all that part of Iceland, and many the man that put off from the mainland and sailed to the island, just to hail the Outlaw, at the head of the ladder, and wish him well. Thus the summer and the next winter passed.

At about the break-up of the winter night, The Hook began to importune his foster-mother, Thurid, that she should make good her promise as to the winning of Grettir. At last she said: "If you are to have my rede, I must have my will. Strike hands with my hand then, and swear to me to do those things that I shall say." And The Hook struck hands and sware the oath.

Then, though he was loath to visit the island again, she bade him man an eight-oared boat and flit her out to Drangey.

When they had reached the island, and after much shouting had brought Grettir and Illugi to the edge of the rock, Thorbjorn again renewed his offer, saying further that if there were now but few sheep left upon the island, he would add a bag of silver pennies to make the difference good.

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"Bootless be your quest," answered Grettir. "Wot this well. What I have said, I have said. My bones shall rot upon Drangey ere I set foot on other soil."

But at his words the carline, who till now had sat huddled in rags and wraps in the bow of the boat, stirred herself and screamed out:

"An ill word for a fair offer. The wits are out of these men that they may not know the face of their good fortune, and upon an evil time have they put their weal from them. Now this I cast over thee, Grettir; that thou be reft of all health and good-hap, all good heed and wisdom, and that the longer ye live the less shall be thy luck. Good hope have I, Grettir, that thy days of gladness shall be fewer in time to come than in time gone by."

And at the words behold, Grettir the Strong, whose might no two men could master, staggered as though struck, and then a rage came upon him, and plucking up a stone from the earth, he flung it at the heap of rags in the boat, so that it fell upon the hag's leg and brake it.

"An evil deed, brother," said Illugi. "Surely no good will come of that."

"Nor none from the words of that hell-cat yonder," answered Grettir. "Not over-much were-gild were paid for us, though the price should be one carline's life."

The Hook sailed back to the mainland after this, and sat at home while the leg of his foster-mother mended. But when she was able to walk again, she bade him lead her forth upon the shore. For a time she hobbled up and down till she had found a piece of driftwood to her liking. She turned it over, now upon this side, now upon that, mumbling to herself the while, till The Hook, puzzled, said:

"What work ye there, foster-mother?"

"The bane of Grettir," answered the witch, and

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with that she crouched herself down by the log and cut runes upon it. Then she stood upright and walked backwards about the log, and went widder-shins around it, and then, after carving more runes, bade Thorbjorn cast it into the sea.

The Hook scoffed and jeered, but, mindful of his oath, set the log adrift. Now the flood tide made strongly at the time, and the wind set from off the ocean.

"It will come to shore," he said.

"Ah, that I hope," said the witch; "to the shore of Drangey."

On the beaches, where the torn scum and froth of the waves shuddered and tumbled to and fro in the wind, The Hook and the old witch stood watching. Thrice the surf flung the log landward, thrice the undertow sucked it back. It was carried under the curve of a great hissing comber, disappeared, then rose dripping on the far side. The hag, bent upon her crutch, her toothless jaws fumbling and working, her grey hair streaming in the wind, fixed a glittering eye, malevolent, iniquitous, far out to sea where Drangey showed itself, a block of misty blue over the horizon's edge.

"A strong spell for a strong man," she muttered, "and an ill curse for an evil deed. Blighted be the breasts that sucked ye, and black and bitter the bread ye eat. Look thou now, foster-son," she cried, raising her voice.

The Hook crossed himself, and his head crouched fearfully between his shoulders. Under his bent brows the glance of him shot uneasily from side to side.

"A bad business," he whispered, and he trembled as he spoke. For the log was riding the waves like a skiff, headed seawards, making way against tide and wind, veering now east, now west, but in the main working steadily toward Drangey. "A bad business, and peril of thy life is toward if the deed thou hast done this day be told of at Thingvalla."

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IV

THE NIGHT-FLITTING OF THORBJORN HOOK

By candle-lighting time that day the storm had reached such a pitch and so mighty was the fury and noise raging across the top of Drangey, that Grettir and Illugi must needs put their lips to one another's ears when they spoke. There was no rain as yet, and the wind that held straight as an arrow's flight over the ocean, had blown away all mists and clouds, so that the atmosphere was of an ominous clearness, and the coasts of Iceland showed livid white against the purple-black of the sky.

There were strange sounds about: the prolonged alarums of the gale; blast trumpeting to blast all through the hollow upper spaces of the air; the metallic slithering of the frozen grasses, writhing and tormented; the minute whistle of driving sand; the majestic diapason of the breakers, and the wild piping of bewildered sea-mews and black swans, as, helpless in the sudden gusts, they drove past, close overhead with slanted wings stretched tense and taut.

Toward evening Grettir and Illugi regained the hut, their bodies bent and inclined against the wind. They bore between them the carcass of a slaughtered sheep, the last on the island, for by now they had killed and eaten all of the herd, with the exception of one old ram, whom they had spared because of his tameness. This one followed the brothers about like a dog, and each night came to the door of the hut and butted against it till he was allowed to come in.

Earlier in the day Grettir, foreseeing that the weather would be hard, had sent Noise, the servant, to gather in a greater supply of drift. The thrall now met the

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brothers at the door of the hut, staggering under the weight of a great log. He threw his burden down at Grettir's feet and spoke surlily, for he was but little pleased with his lot:

"There be that which I hold will warm you enough. Hew it now yourself, for I am spent with the toil of getting it in on such a night as this."

But as Grettir heaved up the axe, Illugi sprang forward with a hand outstretched and a warning cry. He had glanced at the balk of drift, and had seen it to be one that Grettir had twice discarded, suspicious of the runes that he saw were cut into it. Even Noise had been warned and forbidden to bring it to the hut. Doubtless on this day the thrall had found it close by the foot of the ladder, and being too slothful and too ill-tempered to seek farther, had fetched it in despite of Grettir's commands.

"Brother," cried Illugi, "have a heed what ye do!"

But he spoke too late. Grettir hewed strong upon the balk, and the axe flipped from it and drove into his leg below the knee, so that the blade hung in the bone. Grettir flung down the axe, and staggered into the hut and sank upon the bed.

"Ill-luck is to us-ward," he cried, "and now wot I well that my death is upon me. For no good thing was this drift-timber sent thrice to us. Noise, evilly hast thou done, and ill hast thou served us. Go now and draw the ladder, and let thy faithful service henceforth make good the ill-turn thou hast done me to-day." And with the words the brothers drove him out into the night.

Grumbling, the thrall made his way to the ladder-head, and sat down cursing.

"A fine life," he muttered, "hounded like a house-carle from dawn to dark. Because the son of Asmund swings awkwardly his axe and notches the skin of him, I must be driven from house and hearthstone on so

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hard a night as this. Draw the ladder! Ay, draw the ladder, says he. By God! it were no man's deed to risk whether he could win to the island in such a storm as this."

For all that, he made at least one attempt to draw the ladder up. But it was heavy, and the wind, thrashing it to and fro, made it hard to manage. Noise soon gave over, and, out of spite refusing to return to the hut, drew his cloak over his head, and crawling in behind a boulder addressed himself to sleep. He was awakened by a blow.

He sprang up. The night was overcast; it had been raining; his cloak was drenched. Men were there; dark figures crowding together, whispering. There was a click and clash of steel, and against the pale blur of the sky he saw, silhouetted, the moving head of a spear. Again someone struck him. He wrenched about terrified, and a score of hands gripped him close, while at his throat sprang the clutch of fingers iron-strong. Then a voice:

"Fool, and son of a fool, and worse than a fool! It is I, Thorbjorn, called The Hook. Speak as he should speak who is nigh to death, true words and few words. What of Gettir?"

"Sore bestead," Noise made shift to answer, through the grip upon his throat. "Crippled with his own axe as he hewed upon a log of firewood but this very day. Down upon his back he is, and none to stand at his side, when the need is on him, but the boy Illugi."

"A log, say you?" whispered The Hook. Then turning to a comrade: "Mark you that, Hialfi Thinbeard."

"A log cut with runes," insisted Noise.

"Ay, with runes," repeated The Hook. "With runes, I say, Hialfi Thinbeard. My mind misgave me when the carline urged this flitting to-night, and only for my oath's sake I would have foregone it. But an old

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she-goat knows the shortest path to the byre. As for you”—he turned to Noise: “Gettir is mine enemy, and the feud of blood lies between us, but he deserves a better thrall than so foul a bird as thou.”

Thereat he gave the word, and his carles set upon Noise and beat him till no breath was left in his body. Then they bound him hand and foot, and dragged him behind a rock, and left him.

Noise watched them as they drew to one side and whispered together. There were at least twenty of them. For a long moment they conferred together in low voices, while the wind shrilled fiercely in the cluster of their spear-blades. Then there was a movement. The group broke up. Silently and with cautious steps the dark figures of the men moved off in the direction of the hut. Twice, as The Hook gave the word, they halted to listen. Then they moved on again. They disappeared. A pebble clicked under foot, a sword struck faintly against a rock.

There was no more sound. The rain urged by the wind held steadily across the top of the Island of Drangey. It wanted about three hours till dawn.

v

OF THE MAN-SLAYING ON DRANGEY

In the hut, his head upon his brother’s lap, Grettir lay tossing with pain. From the thigh down the leg was useless, and from the thigh down it throbbed with anguish, yet the Outlaw gave no sign of his sufferings, and even to speed the slow passing of the night had sung aloud.

It was a song of the old days, when all men were friendly to him, when he was known as Grettir Asmundson and not Grettir the Outlaw; and as he sang,

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his mind went back through the years of all that wild, troubled life of his, and he remembered many things. Back again in the old home at Biarg, free and happy once more he saw himself as he should have been, head of his mother's household, his foot upon his own hearthstone, his head under his own roostree. And there should be no more foes to fight, and no more hiding and night-riding; no noontime danger to be faced down; no enemies that struck in the dark to be baffled. And he would be free again; he would be among his fellows; he would touch the hand of friends, would know the companionship of brave and honest men and the love of good and honest women. Would it all be his again some day? Would the old, old times come back again? Would there ever be a home-coming for him? Fighter though he was, a hero and a warrior, and though battles and man-slayings more than he could count had been his portion, even though the shock of swords was music to him, there were other things that made life glad. The hand the sword-hilt had calloused could yet remember the touch of a maiden's fingers, and at times, such as this, strange thoughts grew with a strange murmuring in his brain. He was a young man yet; could he but make head against his enemies and his untoward fortune till the sentence of outlawry was overpassed, he might yet begin his life all new again. A wife should be his, and a son should be born to him—a little son to watch at play, to love, to cherish, to boast of, to be proud of, to laugh over, to weep over, to be held against that mighty breast of his, to be enfolded ever so gently in those mighty sword-scarred arms of his. Strange thoughts; strange, indeed, for a wounded outlaw, on that storm-swept, barren rock in the dark, dark hours before the dawn.

"I think," said Grettir after a while, "that now I may sleep a little."

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Illugi made him comfortable upon the sheep-pelts, and put his rolled-up cloak under his head; then, when Grettir had closed his eyes, put a new log upon the fire and sat down nigh at hand.

Long time the lad sat thus watching his brother's face as sleep smoothed from it the lines of pain; as the lips under the long, blond moustaches relaxed a little, and the frown went from the forehead.

It was a kindly face, after all; none of the harshness in it, none of the fierceness in it that so bitter a life as his should have stamped it with—a kindly face, serious, grave even, the face of a big-hearted, generous fellow who bore no malice, who feared no evil, who uttered no complaint, and who looked fate fearless between the eyes.

Something shocked heavily at the door of the hut, and the Outlaw stirred uneasily, and his blue eyes opened a little.

"It is only the old ram, brother," said Illugi. "He butts hard to get in."

"Hard and over hard," muttered Grettir, and as he spoke the door split in twain, and the firelight flashed upon the face of Thorbjorn Hook.

Instantly Illugi was on his feet, his spear in hand. It had come at last, the end of everything. Fate at last was knocking at the door. Grettir was to fight the Last Fight there in that narrow hut, there on that night of storm, in the rain and under the scudding clouds.

Behind him, as he stood facing the riven door and the men that were crowding into the doorway, he heard Grettir struggling to his feet. The fire flared and smoked in the wind, and the rain, as it swept in from without, hissed as it fell among the hot embers. From far down on the beaches came the booming of the surf.

The onset hung poised. After that first splintering of the door The Hook and his men made no move. No

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man spoke. Illugi, his spear held ready, was a statue in the midst of the hut; Grettir, upon one knee, with his great sword in his fist, one hand holding by Illugi's belt, did not move. His eyes, steady, earnest, were upon those of The Hook, and the two men held each other's glances for a moment that seemed immeasurably long. Then at last:

"Who showed thee the way hither?" said Grettir quietly.

"God showed us the way," The Hook made answer.

"Nay, nay, it was the hag, thy foster-mother."

But the sound of voices broke the spell. In an instant the great fight—the fight that would be told of in Iceland for hundreds of years to come—burst suddenly forth like the bursting of a dyke. Illugi had leaped forward, and through the smoke of the weltering fire his spear-blade flashed, curving like the curving leap of a salmon in the rapids of the Jokulsa. There was a cry, a rush of many feet, a parting of the group in the doorway, and Hialfi Thinbeard's hands shut their death-grip upon the shaft of Illugi's spear as the blade of it tore out between his shoulders.

But now men were upon the roof—Karr, son of Karr, thrall of Tongue-stone, Vikaar and Haldarr of the household of Eirik of Good-dale, Hafr of Meadness in the Fleets and Thorwald of Hegranness—tearing away the thatch and thrusting madly downward with sword and spear. Illugi dropped the haft of the weapon that had slain Hialfi, and catching up another one, made as if to drive it through the hatch. But even as he did so the whole roof cracked and sagged; then it gave way at one corner, and Karr, son of Karr, fell headlong from above. Grettir caught him on his sword-point as he fell, and at the same moment The Hook drove a small boar-spear clean through Illugi's head.

And from that moment all semblance of consecutive

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action was lost. Yelling, shouting, groaning, cursing, the men rushed together in one blurred and furious grapple. The wrecked hut collapsed, crashing upon their heads; the fire, kicked and trampled as the fight raged back and forth, caught the thatch and sheep-pelts, and flamed up fiercely in and around the combat. They fought literally in fire—in fire and thick smoke and driving rain. The arms that thrust with spear or hewed with sword rose and fell all ablaze. Those who fell, fell among hot coals and fought their fellows—their own friends—to make way that they might escape the torment.

Twice Grettir, dying though he was, flung the fight from him and rose to his full height, a dreadful figure, alone for an instant, bloody, dripping, charred with ashes, half naked, his clothes all burning; and twice again they flung themselves upon him, and bore him down, so that he disappeared beneath their mass. And ever and again from out the swirl of the onset, from that unspeakable jam of men, mad with the battle-madness that was upon them, crawled out some horrid figure, staggering, gashed, and maimed, or even dying, done to death by the great Outlaw in the last fight of his life. Thorfin, Gamli's man, had both arms broken at the very shoulders; Krolf of Drontheim reeled back from the battle with a sword-thrust through his hip that made him go on crutches the rest of his life; Kolbein, churl of Svein, died two days later of a spear-thrust through the bowels; Ognund, Hakon's son, never was able to use his right arm after that night.

Hardly a man of all the twenty that did not for all the rest of his life bear upon his body the marks of Grettir's death-fight. Still Grettir bore up. He had with one arm caught Thorir, The Hook's stoutest house-carle, around the throat, while his other arm, that wielded his sword, hewed and hewed and smote and

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thrust as though it would never tire. Even above the din of the others rose the clamour of Thorir's agony. Once again Grettir cleared a space around him, and stood with dripping sword, his left arm still crushing Thorir in that awful embrace. Thorir was weaponless, his face purple. No thought of battle was left in him, and frantic, he stretched out a hand to his fellows, his voice a wail:

“Help me, Thorbjorn. He is killing me. For Christ’s sake—”

And Grettir’s blade nailed the words within his throat. The wretch slid to the ground doubled in a heap, the blood gushing from his mouth.

Then those that yet remained alive, drawn off a little, panting, spent, saw a terrible sight—the death of Grettir.

For a moment in that flicker of fire he seemed to grow larger. Alone, unassailable, erect among those heaps of dead and dying enemies, his stature seemed as it were suddenly to increase. He towered above them, his head in swirls of smoke, the great bare shoulders gleaming with his blood, the long braids of yellow hair soaked with it. Awful, gigantic, suddenly a demi-god, he stood colossal, a man made more than human. The eyes of him fixed, wide open, looked out into the darkness above their heads, unwinking, unafraid—looked into the darkness and into the eyes of Death, unafraid, unshaken.

There he stood already dead, yet still upon his feet, rigid as iron, his back unbent, his neck proud, while they cowered before him holding their breath, waiting, watching. Then, like a mighty pine tree, stiff, unbending, he swayed slowly forward. Stiff as a sword-blade, the great body leaned over farther and farther; slowly at first, then with increased momentum inclined swiftly earthward. He fell, and they could believe that

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the crash of that fall shook the earth beneath their feet. He died as he would have wished to die, in battle, his harness on, his sword in his grip. He lay face downward amid the dead ashes of the trampled fire and moved no more.

THE GUEST OF HONOUR

PART ONE

THE doctor shut and locked his desk drawer upon his memorandum book with his right hand, and extended the left to his friend Manning Verrill, with the remark:

"Well, Manning, how are you?"

"If I were well, Henry," answered Verrill gravely, "I would not be here."

The doctor leaned back in his deep leather chair, and having carefully adjusted his glasses, tilted back his head, and looked at Verrill from beneath them. He waited for him to continue.

"It's my nerves—I *suppose*," began Verrill. "Henry," he declared suddenly, leaning forward, "Henry, I'm scared; that's what's the matter with me—I'm scared."

"Scared?" echoed the doctor. "What nonsense! What of?"

"Scared of death, Henry," broke out Verrill, "scared blue!"

"It is your nerves," murmured the doctor. "You need travel and a bromide, my boy. There's nothing the matter with you. Why, you're good for another forty years—yes, or even for another fifty years. You're sound as a nut. You, to talk about death!"

"I've seen thirty—twenty-nine I should say, twenty-nine of my best friends go."

The doctor looked puzzled a moment; then—"Oh! you mean that club of yours," said he.

"Yes," said Verrill. "Great heavens! to think that

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I should be the last man, after all—well, one of us had to be the last. And that's where the trouble is, Henry. It's been growing on me for the last two years—ever since Curtice died. He was the twenty-sixth. And he died only a month before the Annual Dinner. Arnold, Brill, Steve—Steve Sharrett you know, and I—just the four—were left then; and we sat down to that big table alone; and when we came to the toast of 'The Absent Ones' . . . Well, Henry, we were pretty solemn before we got through. And we knew that the choice of the last man—who would face those thirty-one empty covers and open the bottle of wine that we all set aside at our first dinner, and drink 'The Absent Ones'—was narrowing down pretty fine.

"Next year there were only Arnold and Steve and myself left. Brill—well, you know all about his death. The three of us got through dinner somehow. The year after that we were still three, and even the year after that. Then poor old Steve went down with the *Dreibund* in the bay of Biscay, and four months afterward Arnold and I sat down to the table at the Annual, alone. I'm not going to forget that evening in a hurry. Why, Henry—oh, never mind. Then—"

"Well," prompted the doctor as his friend paused.

"Arnold died three months ago. And the day of our Annual—I mean my—the club's," Verrill changed his position. "The date of the dinner, the Annual Dinner, is next month, and I'm the only one left."

"And, of course, you'll not go," declared the doctor.

"Oh, yes," said Verrill. "Yes, I will go, of course. But—" He shook his head with a long sigh. "When the Last Man Club was organized," he went on, "in '68, we were all more or less young. It was a great idea, at least I felt that way about it, but I didn't believe that thirty young men would persist in anything—of that sort—very long. But no member of the club died for the

first five years, and the club met every year and had its dinner without much thought of—of consequences, and of the inevitable. We met just to be sociable."

"Hold on," interrupted the doctor, "you are speaking now of thirty. Awhile ago you said thirty-one."

"Yes, I know," assented Verrill. "There were thirty in the club, but we always placed an extra cover—for—for the Guest of Honour."

The doctor made a movement of impatience. Then in a moment, "Well," he said, resignedly, "go on."

"That's about the essentials," answered Verrill. "The first death was in '73. And from that year on the vacant places at the table have steadily increased. Little by little the original bravado of the thing dropped out of it all for me; and of late years—well, I have told you how it is. I've seen so many of them die, and die so fast, so regularly—one a year you might say—that I've kept saying 'who next, who next, who's to go this year?' . . . And as they went, one by one, and still I was left . . . I tell you, Henry, the suspense was, . . . the suspense is . . . You see I'm the last now, and ever since Curtice died, I've felt this thing weighing on me. *By God, Henry, I'm afraid; I'm afraid of Death! It's horrible!* It's as though I were on the list of 'condemned' and were listening to hear my name called every minute."

"Well, so are all of us, if you come to that," observed the doctor.

"Oh, I know, I know," cried Verrill, "it is morbid and all that. But that don't help *me* any. Can you imagine me one month from to-morrow night? Think now. I'm alone, absolutely, and there is the long empty table, with the thirty places set, and the extra place, and those places are where all my old friends used to sit. And at twelve I get up and give first 'The Absent Ones,' and then 'The Guest of the Evening.' I

gave those toasts last year, but there were two of us, then, and the year before there were three. But ever since Curtice died and we were narrowed down to four, this thing has been weighing on me—this idea of death, and I've conceived a horror of it—a—a dread. And now I am the last. I had no idea this would ever happen to me; or if it did, that it would be like this. I'm shaken, Henry, shaken. I've not slept for three nights. So I've come to you. You must help me."

"So I will, by advising you. You give up the idiocy. Cut out the dinner this year; yes, and for always."

"You don't understand," replied Verrill calmly. "It is impossible. I could not keep away. I *must* be there."

"But it's simple lunacy," expostulated the doctor. "Man, you've worked upon your nerves over this fool club and dinner, till I won't be responsible for you if you carry out this notion. Come, promise me you will take the train for, say, Florida, to-morrow, and *I'll* give you stuff that will make you sleep. St. Augustine is heaven at this time of year, and I hear the tarpon have come in. Shall——"

Verrill shook his head.

"You don't understand," he repeated. "You simply don't understand. No, I shall go to the dinner. But of course I'm—I'm nervous—a little. Did I say I was scared? I didn't mean that. Oh, I'm all right; I just want you to prescribe for me, something for the nerves. Henry, death is a terrible thing—to see 'em all struck down, twenty-nine of 'em—splendid boys. Henry, I'm not a coward. There's a difference between cowardice and fear. For hours last night I was trying to work it out. Cowardice—that's just turning tail and running; but I shall go through that Annual Dinner, and that's ordeal enough, believe me. But fear—it's just death in the abstract that unmans me. *That's* the thing to fear.

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To think that we all go along living and working and fussing from day to day, when we *know* that this great Monster, this Horror, is walking up and down the streets, and that sooner or later he'll catch us—that we can't escape. Isn't it the greatest curse in the world! We're so used to it we don't realize the Thing. But suppose one could eliminate the Monster altogether. Then we'd realize how sweet life was, and we'd look back at the old days with horror—just as I do now."

"Oh, but this is rubbish," cried the doctor, "simple drivel. Manning, I'm ashamed of you. I'll prescribe for you. I suppose I've got to. But a good rough fishing-and-hunting trip would do more for you than a gallon of drugs. If you won't go to Florida, get out of town, if it's only over Sunday. Here's your prescription, and *do* take a Friday-to-Monday trip. Tramp in the woods, get tired, and *don't go to that dinner!*"

"You don't understand," repeated Verrill, as the two stood up. He put the prescription into his pocket-book. "You don't understand. I couldn't keep away. It's a duty, and besides—well, I couldn't make you see. Good-bye. This stuff will make me sleep, eh? And do my nerves good, too, you say? I see. I'll come back to you if it don't work. Good-bye again. *This* door is, it? Not through the waiting room, eh? Yes, I remember. . . . Henry, did you ever—did you ever face death yourself—I mean—"

"Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense," cried the doctor. But Verrill persisted. His back to the closed door, he continued:

"I did. I faced death once, so you see I should know. It was when I was a lad of twenty. My father had a line of New Orleans packets and I often used to make the trip as super-cargo. One October day we were caught in the equinox off Hatteras, and before we knew it we were wondering if she would last another half-hour,

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Along in the afternoon there came a sea aboard, and caught me unawares. I lost my hold and felt myself going, going. . . . I was sure for ten seconds that it was the end—and *I saw death then, face to face!*

“And I’ve never forgotten it. I’ve only to shut my eyes to see it all, hear it all—the naked spars rocking against the grey-blue of the sky, the wrench and creak of the ship, the threshing of rope ends, the wilderness of pale green water, the sound of rain and scud. . . . No, no, I’ll not forget it. And death was a horrid spectre in that glimpse I got of him. I—I don’t care to see him again. Well, good-bye once more.”

“Good-bye, Manning, and believe me, this is all hypochondria. Go and catch fish. Go shoot something, and in twenty-four hours you’ll believe there’s no such thing as death.”

The door closed. Verrill was gone.

PART TWO

The banquet hall was in the top story of one of the loftiest skyscrapers of the city. Along the eastern wall was a row of windows reaching from ceiling to floor, and as the extreme height of the building made it unnecessary to draw the curtains, whoever was at the table could look out and over the entire city in that direction. Thus it was that Manning Verrill, on a certain night some four weeks after his interview with the doctor, sat there at his walnuts and black coffee and, absorbed, abstracted, looked out over the panorama beneath him, where the Life of a great nation centred and throbbed.

To the unenlightened the hall would have presented a strange spectacle. Down its centre extended the long table. The chairs were drawn up, the covers laid. But the chairs were empty, the covers untouched; and

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but for the presence of the one man the hall was empty, deserted.

At the head of the table Verrill, in evening dress, a gardenia in his lapel, his napkin across his lap, an unlighted cigar in his fingers, sat motionless, looking out over the city with unseeing eyes. Of thirty places around the table, none was distinctive, none varied. But at Verrill's right hand the thirty-first place, the place of honour, differed from all the rest. The chair was large, massive. The oak of which it was made was black, while instead of the usual array of silver and porcelain, one saw but two vessels—an unopened bottle of wine and a large silver cup heavily chased.

From far below in the city's streets eleven o'clock struck. The sounds broke in upon Verrill's reverie and he stirred, glanced about the room and then, rising, went to the window and stood there for some time looking out.

At his feet, far beneath, lay the city, twinkling with lights. In the business quarter all was dark, but from the district of theatres and restaurants there arose a glare into the night, ruddy, vibrating, with here and there a ganglion of electric bulbs upon a "fire sign" emphasizing itself in a whiter radiance. Cable-cars and cabs threaded the streets with little starring eyes of coloured lights, while underneath all this blur of illumination, the people, debouching from the theatres, filled the sidewalks with tiny ant-like swarms, minute, bustling.

Farther on in the residence district, occasional lighted windows watched with the street-lamps gazing blankly into the darkness. In particular one house was all ablaze. Every window glowed. No doubt a great festivity was in progress and Verrill could almost fancy that he heard the strains of the music, the rustle of the silks.

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Then nearer at hand, but more to the eastward, where the office buildings rose in tower-like clusters and sombre groups, Verrill could see a vista of open water—the harbour. Lights were moving here, green and red, as the great hoarse-voiced freighters stood out with the tide.

And beyond this was the sea itself, and more lights, very, very faint where the ships rolled leisurely in the ground swells; ships bound to and from all ports of the earth—ships that united the nations, that brought the whole world of living men under the view of the lonely watcher in the empty Banquet Hall.

Verrill raised the window. At once a subdued murmur, prolonged, monotonous—the same murmur as that which disengages itself from forests, from the sea, and from sleeping armies—rose to meet him. It was the mingling of all the night noises into one great note that came simultaneously from all quarters of the horizon, infinitely vast, infinitely deep—a steady diapason strain like the undermost bourdon of a great organ as the wind begins to thrill the pipes.

It was the stir of life, the breathing of the Colossus, the push of the nethermost basic force, old as the world, wide as the world, the murmur of the primeval energy, coeval with the centuries, blood-brother to that spirit which, in the brooding darkness before creation, moved upon the face of the waters.

And besides this, as Verrill stood there looking out, the night wind brought to him, along with the taint of the sea, the odour of the heaped-up fruit in the city's markets and even the suggestion of the vegetable gardens in the suburbs.

Across his face, like the passing of a long breath, he felt the abrupt sensation of life, indestructible, persistent.

But absorbed in other things, Verrill, unmoved, and

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only dimly comprehending, closed the window and turned back into the room. At his place stood an unopened bottle and a glass as yet dry. He removed the foil from the neck of the bottle, but after looking at his watch, set it down again without drawing the cork. It lacked some fifteen minutes to midnight.

Once again, as he had already done so many times that evening, Verrill wiped the moisture from his forehead. He shut his teeth against the slow thick labouring of his heart. He was alone. The sense of isolation, of abandonment, weighed down upon him intolerably as he looked up and down the empty table. Alone, alone; all the rest were gone, and he stood there, in the solitude of that midnight; he, last of all that company whom he had known and loved. Over and over again he muttered:

"All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." Then slowly Verrill began to make the circuit of the table, reading, as if from a roll call, the names written on the cards which lay upon the place-plates. "Anderson, . . . Evans, . . . Copeland—dear old 'crooked-face' Copeland, his camp companion in those Maine fishing-trips of the old days, dead now these ten years. . . . Stryker—'Buff' Stryker they had called him, dead—he had forgotten how long—drowned in his yacht off the Massachusetts coast; Harris, died of typhoid somewhere in Italy; Dick Herndon, killed in a mine accident in Mexico; Rice, old 'Whitey Rice,' a suicide in a California cattle town; Curtice, carried off by fever in Durban, South Africa." Thus around the whole table he moved, telling the bead-roll of death, following in the footsteps of the Monster who never relented, who never tired, who never, never, never forgot.

His own turn would come some day. Verrill, sunken into his chair, put his hands over his eyes. Yes, his own

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turn would come. There was no escape. That dreadful face would rise again before his eyes. He would bow his back to the scourge of nations, he would roll helpless beneath the wheels of the great car. How to face that prospect with fortitude! How to look into those terrible grey eyes with calm! Oh, the terror of that gorgon face, oh, the horror of those sightless, lightless grey eyes!

But suddenly midnight struck. He heard the strokes come booming upward from the city streets. His vigil was all but over.

Verrill opened the bottle of wine, breaking the seal that had been affixed to the cork on the night of the first meeting of the club. Filling his glass, he rose in his place. His eyes swept the table, and while for the last time the memories came thronging back, his lips formed the words:

"To the Absent Ones: to you, Curtice, Anderson, Brill; to you, Copeland; to you, Stryker; to you, Arnold; to you all, my old comrades, all you old familiar faces who are absent to-night."

He emptied the glass, but immediately filled it again. The last toast was to be drunk, the last of all. Verrill, the glass raised, straightened himself.

But even as he stood there, glass in hand, he shivered slightly. He made note of it for the moment, yet his emotions had so shaken him during all that evening that he could well understand the little shudder that passed over him for a moment.

But he caught himself glancing at the windows. All were shut. The doors of the hall were closed, the flames of the chandeliers were steady. Whence came then this certain sense of coolness that so suddenly had invaded the air? The coolness was not disagreeable, but none the less the temperature of the room had been lowered, at least so he could fancy. Yet already he was dismiss-

ing the matter from his mind. No doubt the weather had changed suddenly.

In the next second, however, another peculiar circumstance forced itself upon his attention. The stillness of the Banquet Hall, placed as it was at the top of one of the highest buildings in the city, was no matter of comment to Verrill. He was long since familiar with it. But for all that, even through the closed windows, and through the medium of steel and brick and marble that composed the building the indefinite murmur of the city's streets had always made itself felt in the hall. It was faint, yet it was distinct. That bourdon of life to which he had listened that very evening was not wholly to be shut out, yet now, even in this supreme moment of the occasion, it was impossible for Verrill to ignore the fancy that an unusual stillness had all at once widened about him, like the widening of unseen ripples. There was not a sound, and he told himself that stillness such as this was only the portion of the deaf. No faintest tremor of noise rose from the streets. The vast building itself had suddenly grown as soundless as the unplumbed depth of the sea. But Verrill shook himself; all evening fancies such as these had besieged him, even now they were prolonging the ordeal. Once this last toast drunk and he was released from his duty. He raised his glass again, and then in a loud clear voice he said:

"Gentlemen, I give you the toast of the evening." And as he emptied the glass, a quick, light footstep sounded in the corridor outside the door.

Verrill looked up in great annoyance. The corridor led to but one place, the door of the Banquet Hall, and anyone coming down the corridor at so brisk a pace could have but one intention—that of entering the hall. Verrill frowned at the idea of an intruder. His orders had been of the strictest. That a stranger should thrust

himself upon his company at this of all moments was exasperating.

But the footsteps drew nearer, and as Verrill stood frowning at the door at the far end of the hall, it opened.

A gentleman came in, closed the door behind him, and faced about. Verrill scrutinized him with an intent eye.

He was faultlessly dressed, and just by his manner of carrying himself in his evening clothes Verrill knew that here was breeding, distinction. The newcomer was tall, slim. Also he was young; Verrill, though he could not have placed his age with any degree of accuracy, would none the less have disposed of the question by setting him down as a young man. But Verrill further observed that the gentleman was very pale, even his lips lacked colour. However, as he looked closer, he discovered that this pallor was hardly the result of any present emotion, but was rather constitutional.

There was a moment's silence as the two looked at each other the length of the Hall; then with a peculiarly pleasant smile the stranger came forward drawing off his white glove and extending his hand. He seemed so at home, so perfectly at his ease, and at the same time so much of what Verrill was wont to call a "thoroughbred fellow" that the latter found it impossible to cherish any resentment. He preferred to believe that the stranger had made some readily explained mistake which would be rectified in their first spoken words. Thus it was that he was all the more nonplussed when the stranger took him by the hand with the words: "This is Mr. Manning Verrill, of course. I am very glad to meet you again, sir. Two such as you and I who have once been so intimate should never forget each other."

Verrill had it upon his lips to inform the other that he had something the advantage of him; but at the

last moment he was unable to utter the words. The newcomer's pleasure in the meeting was so hearty, so spontaneous, that he could not quite bring himself to jeopardize it—at the outset at least—by a confession of implied unfriendliness; so instead he clumsily assumed the other's manner, and, though deeply perplexed, managed to attain a certain heartiness as he exclaimed: "But you have come very late. I have already dined, and by the way, let me explain why you find me here alone, in a deserted banquet hall with covers laid for so many."

"Indeed, you need not explain," replied the stranger. "I am a member of your club, you know."

A member of the club, this total stranger! Verrill could not hide a frown of renewed perplexity; surely this face was not one of any friend he ever had. "A charter member, you might say," the other continued; "but singularly enough, I have never been able to attend one of the meetings until now. Of us all I think I have been the busiest—and the one most widely travelled. Such must be my excuses."

At the moment an explanation occurred to Verrill. It was within the range of the possible that the newcomer was an old member of the club, some sojourner in a foreign country, whose death had been falsely reported. Possibly Verrill had lost track of him. It was not always easy to "place" at once every one of the thirty. The two sat down, but almost immediately Verrill exclaimed:

"Pardon me, but—that chair. The omen would be so portentous! You have taken the wrong place. You who are a member of the club! You must remember that we reserved that chair—the one you are occupying."

But the stranger smiled calmly.

"I defy augury, and I snap my fingers at the portent. Here is my place and here I choose to remain."

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"As you will," answered Verrill, "but it is a singular choice. It is not conducive to appetite."

"My dear Verrill," answered the other, "I shall not dine, if you will permit me to say so. It is very late and my time is limited. I can stay but a short while at best. I have much to do to-night after I leave you—much good I hope, much good. For which," he added rather sadly, "I shall receive no thanks, only abuse, only abuse, my dear Verrill." Verrill was only half listening. He was looking at the other's face, and as he looked he wondered; for the brow was of the kind fitted for crowns, and from beneath glowed the glance of a king. The mouth seemed to have been shaped by the utterance of the commands of empire. The whole face was astonishing, full of power tempered by a great kindness. Verrill could not keep his gaze from those wonderful, calm grey eyes. Who was this extraordinary man met under such strange circumstances, alone and in the night, in the midst of so many dead memories, and surrounded by that inexplicable stillness, that sudden, profound peace? And what was the subtle magnetism that upon sight drew him so powerfully to the stranger? Kingly he was, but Verrill seemed to feel that he was more than that. He was—could be—a friend, such a friend as in all their circle of dead companions he had never known. In his company he knew he need never be ashamed of weakness, human, natural, ordained weakness, need not be ashamed because of the certainty of being perfectly and thoroughly understood. Thus it was that when the stranger had spoken the words "—only abuse, only abuse, my dear Verrill," Verrill, starting from his muse, answered quickly: "What, abuse, you! in return for good! You astonish me."

"'Abuse' is the mildest treatment I dare expect; it will no doubt be curses. Of all personages, I am the

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one most cruelly misunderstood. My friends are few, few, oh, so pitifully few."

"Of whom may I be one?" exclaimed Verrill.

"I hope," said the stranger gravely, "we shall be the best of friends. When we met before I am afraid, my appearance was too abrupt and—what shall I say—unpleasant to win your good will." Verrill, in some embarrassment, framed a lame reply; but the other continued:

"You do not remember, as I can easily understand. My manner at that time was against me. It was a whim, but I chose to be most forbidding on that occasion. I am a very Harlequin in my moods; Harlequin did I say, my dear fellow? I am the Prince of Masqueraders."

"But a prince in all events," murmured Verrill, half to himself.

"Prince and slave," returned the other, "slave to circumstance."

"Are we not all——" began Verrill, but the stranger continued:

"Slave to circumstance, slave to time, slave to natural laws, none so abject as I, in my servility. When the meanest, the lowest, the very weakest calls, I must obey. On the other hand, none so despotic as I, none so absolute. When I summon, the strongest must respond; when I command, the most powerful must obey. My profession, my dear Verrill, is an arduous one."

"Your profession is, I take it," observed Verrill, "that of a physician."

"You may say so," replied the other, "and you may also say an efficient one. But I am always the last to be summoned. I am a last resource; my remedy is a heroic one. But it prevails—inevitably. No pain, my dear Verrill, so sharp that I cannot allay, no anguish so great that I cannot soothe."

"Then perhaps you may prescribe for me," said

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Verrill. "Of late I have been perturbed. I have lived under a certain strain, certain contingencies threaten, which, no doubt unreasonably, I have come to dread. I am shaken, nervous, fearful. My own doctor has been unable to help me. Perhaps you——"

The stranger had already opened the bottle of wine which stood by his plate, and filled the silver cup. He handed it to Verrill.

"Drink," he said.

Verrill hesitated.

"But this wine," he protested. "This cup—pardon me, it was reserved——"

"Drink," repeated the stranger. "Trust me."

He took Verrill's glass in which he had drunk the toasts and which yet contained a little wine. He pressed the silver cup into Verrill's hands.

"Drink," he urged for the third time.

Verrill took the cup, and the stranger raised his glass.

"To our better acquaintance," he said.

But Verrill, at length at the end of all conjecture, cried out, the cup still in his hand:

"Your toast is most appropriate, sir. A better acquaintance with you, I assure you, would be most pleasing to me. But I must ask your pardon for my stupidity. Where have we met before? Who are you, and what is your name?"

The stranger did not immediately reply, but fixed his grave grey eyes upon Verrill's. For a moment he held his gaze in his own. Then as the seconds slipped by, the first indefinite sense of suspicion flashed across Verrill's mind, flashed and faded, returned once more, faded again, and left him wondering. Then as the stranger said:

"Do you remember—it was long ago. Do you remember the sight of naked spars rocking against a grey torn sky, a ship wrenching and creaking, wrestling with

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the wind, a world of pale green surges, the gale singing through the cordage, and then as the sea swept the decks—ah, you *do* remember.”

For Verrill had started suddenly, and with the movement, full recognition, complete, unequivocal, gleamed suddenly in his eyes. There was a long silence while he returned the gaze of the other, now no longer a stranger. At length Verrill spoke, drawing a long breath:

“Ah . . . it is you . . . at last.”

“Well!”

Verrill smiled.

“It *is* well, I had imagined it would be so different, when you did come. But as it *is*,” he extended his hand, “I am very glad to meet you.”

“Did I not tell you,” said the other, “that of all the world, I am the most cruelly misunderstood?”

“But you confessed to the masquerade.”

“Oh, blind, blind, not to see behind the foolish masque. Come, we have not yet drunk.”

He placed the cup in Verrill’s hands, and once again raised the glass.

“To our better acquaintance,” he said.

“To our better acquaintance,” echoed Verrill. He drained the cup.

“The lees were bitter,” he observed.

“But the effect?”

“Yes, it is calming—already, exquisitely so. It is not—as I have imagined for so long, deadening; on the contrary, it is invigorating, revivifying. I feel born again.”

The other rose. “Then there is no need,” he said, “to stay here any longer. Come, shall we be going?”

“Yes, yes, I am ready,” answered Verrill. “Look,” he exclaimed, pointing to the windows. “Look—it is morning.”

Low in the east, the dawn was rising over the city.

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A new day was coming; the stars were paling, the night was over.

"That is true," said Verrill's new friend. "Another day is coming. It is time we went out to meet it."

They rose and passed down the length of the Banquet Hall. He who had called himself the great Physician, the Servant of the Humble, the Master of Kings, the Prince of Masqueraders, held open the door for Verrill to pass. But when the man had gone out, the Prince paused a moment, and looked back upon the deserted Banquet Hall, lit partly by the steady electrics, partly by the pale light of morning, that now began with ever-increasing radiance to stream through the eastern windows. Then he stretched forth his hand and laid his touch upon a button in the wall. Instantly the lights sank, vanished; for a moment the hall seemed dark.

He went out quietly, shutting the door behind him.

And the Banquet Hall remained deserted, lonely, empty, yet it was neither dark nor lifeless. Stronger and stronger grew the flood of light that burned roseate toward the zenith as the sun came up. It penetrated to every corner of the room, and the drops of wine left in the bottom of the glasses flashed like jewels in the radiance. From without, from the city's streets, came the murmur of increasing activity. Through the night it had droned on, like the low-pitched diapason of some vast organ, but now as the sun rose, it swelled in volume. Louder it grew and ever louder. Its sound-waves beat upon the windows of the hall. They invaded the hall itself.

It was the symphony of energy, the vast orchestration of force, the pæan of an indestructible life, coeval with the centuries, renascent, ordained, eternal.

A DEAL IN WHEAT

AND OTHER STORIES

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A DEAL IN WHEAT

I

THE BEAR—WHEAT AT SIXTY-TWO

AS SAM LEWISTON backed the horse into the shafts of his buckboard and began hitching the tugs to the whiffletree, his wife came out from the kitchen door of the house and drew near, and stood for some time at the horse's head, her arms folded and her apron rolled around them. For a long moment neither spoke. They had talked over the situation so long and so comprehensively the night before that there seemed to be nothing more to say.

The time was late in the summer, the place a ranch in southwestern Kansas, and Lewiston and his wife were two of a vast population of farmers, wheat growers, who at that moment were passing through a crisis—a crisis that at any moment might culminate in tragedy. Wheat was down to sixty-six.

At length Emma Lewiston spoke.

"Well," she hazarded, looking vaguely out across the ranch toward the horizon, leagues distant; "well, Sam, there's always that offer of brother Joe's. We can quit—and go to Chicago—if the worst comes."

"And give up!" exclaimed Lewiston, running the lines through the torets. "Leave the ranch! Give up! After all these years!"

His wife made no reply for the moment. Lewiston climbed into the buckboard and gathered up the lines. "Well, here goes for the last try, Emmie," he said.

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"Good-bye, girl. Maybe things will look better in town to-day."

"Maybe," she said gravely. She kissed her husband good-bye and stood for some time looking after the buck-board travelling toward the town in a moving pillar of dust.

"I don't know," she murmured at length; "I don't know just how we're going to make out."

When he reached town, Lewiston tied the horse to the iron railing in front of the Odd Fellows' Hall, the ground floor of which was occupied by the post-office, and went across the street and up the stairway of a building of brick and granite—quite the most pretentious structure of the town—and knocked at a door upon the first landing. The door was furnished with a pane of frosted glass, on which, in gold letters, was inscribed, "Bridges & Co., Grain Dealers."

Bridges himself, a middle-aged man who wore a velvet skull-cap and who was smoking a Pittsburgh stogie, met the farmer at the counter and the two exchanged perfunctory greetings.

"Well," said Lewiston, tentatively, after a while.

"Well, Lewiston," said the other, "I can't take that wheat of yours at any better than sixty-two."

"Sixty-two!"

"It's the Chicago price that does it, Lewiston. Truslow is bearing the stuff for all he's worth. It's Truslow and the bear clique that stick the knife into us. The price broke again this morning. We've just got a wire."

"Good heavens," murmured Lewiston, looking vaguely from side to side. "That—that ruins me. I can't carry my grain any longer—what with storage charges and—and—Bridges, I don't see just how I'm going to make out. Sixty-two cents a bushel! Why, man, what with this and with that it's cost me nearly a dollar a bushel to raise that wheat, and now Truslow——"

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He turned away abruptly with a quick gesture of infinite discouragement.

He went down the stairs, and making his way to where his buckboard was hitched, got in, and, with eyes vacant, the reins slipping and sliding in his limp, half-open hands, drove slowly back to the ranch. His wife had seen him coming, and met him as he drew up before the barn.

"Well?" she demanded.

"Emmie," he said as he got out of the buckboard, laying his arm across her shoulder, "Emmie, I guess we'll take up with Joe's offer. We'll go to Chicago. We're cleaned out!"

II

THE BULL—WHEAT AT A DOLLAR-TEN

. . . —and said Party of the Second Part further covenants and agrees to merchandise such wheat in foreign ports, it being understood and agreed between the Party of the First Part and the Party of the Second Part that the wheat hereinbefore mentioned is released and sold to the Party of the Second Part for export purposes only, and not for consumption or distribution within the boundaries of the United States of America or of Canada.

"Now, Mr. Gates, if you will sign for Mr. Truslow I guess that'll be all," remarked Hornung when he had finished reading.

Hornung affixed his signature to the two documents and passed them over to Gates, who signed for his principal and client, Truslow—or, as he had been called ever since he had gone into the fight against Hornung's corner—the Great Bear. Hornung's secretary was called in and witnessed the signatures, and Gates thrust the contract into his Gladstone bag and stood up, smoothing his hat.

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"You will deliver the warehouse receipts for the grain," began Gates.

"I'll send a messenger to Truslow's office before noon," interrupted Hornung. "You can pay by certified check through the Illinois Trust people."

When the other had taken himself off, Hornung sat for some moments gazing abstractedly toward his office windows, thinking over the whole matter. He had just agreed to release to Truslow, at the rate of one dollar and ten cents per bushel, one hundred thousand out of the two million and odd bushels of wheat that he, Hornung, controlled, or actually owned. And for the moment he was wondering if, after all, he had done wisely in not goring the Great Bear to actual financial death. He had made him pay one hundred thousand dollars. Truslow was good for this amount. Would it not have been better to have put a prohibitive figure on the grain and forced the bear into bankruptcy? True, Hornung would then be without his enemy's money, but Truslow would have been eliminated from the situation, and that—so Hornung told himself—was always a consummation most devoutly, strenuously, and diligently to be striven for. Truslow once dead was dead, but the Bear was never more dangerous than when desperate.

"But so long as he can't get *wheat*," muttered Hornung at the end of his reflections, "he can't hurt me. And he can't get it. That I *know*."

For Hornung controlled the situation. So far back as the February of that year an "unknown bull" had been making his presence felt on the floor of the Board of Trade. By the middle of March the commercial reports of the daily press had begun to speak of "the powerful bull clique"; a few weeks later that legendary condition of affairs implied and epitomized in the magic words "Dollar Wheat" had been attained, and by the

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first of April, when the price had been boosted to one dollar and ten cents a bushel, Hornung had disclosed his hand, and in place of mere rumours, the definite and authoritative news that May wheat had been cornered in the Chicago pit went flashing around the world from Liverpool to Odessa and from Duluth to Buenos Ayres.

It was—so the veteran operators were persuaded—Truslow himself who had made Hornung's corner possible. The Great Bear had for once over-reached himself, and, believing himself all-powerful, had hammered the price just the fatal fraction too far down. Wheat had gone to sixty-two—for the time, and under the circumstances, an abnormal price. When the reaction came it was tremendous. Hornung saw his chance, seized it, and in a few months had turned the tables, had cornered the product, and virtually driven the bear clique out of the pit.

On the same day that the delivery of the hundred thousand bushels was made to Truslow, Hornung met his broker at his lunch club.

"Well," said the latter, "I see you let go that line of stuff to Truslow."

Hornung nodded; but the broker added:

"Remember, I was against it from the very beginning. I know we've cleared up over a hundred thou'. I would have fifty times preferred to have lost twice that and *smashed Truslow dead*. Bet you what you like he makes us pay for it somehow."

"Huh!" grunted his principal. "How about insurance, and warehouse charges, and carrying expenses on that lot? Guess we'd have had to pay those, too, if we'd held on."

But the other put up his chin, unwilling to be persuaded. "I won't sleep easy," he declared, "till Truslow is busted."

THE PIT

Just as Going mounted the steps on the edge of the pit the great gong struck, a roar of a hundred voices developed with the swiftness of successive explosions, the rush of a hundred men surging downward to the centre of the pit filled the air with the stamp and grind of feet, a hundred hands in eager, strenuous gestures tossed upward from out the brown of the crowd, the official reporter in his cage on the margin of the pit leaned far forward with straining ear to catch the opening bid, and another day of battle was begun.

Since the sale of the hundred thousand bushels of wheat to Truslow the "Hornung crowd" had steadily shouldered the price higher until on this particular morning it stood at one dollar and a half. That was Hornung's price. No one else had any grain to sell.

But not ten minutes after the opening, Going was surprised out of all countenance to hear shouted from the other side of the pit these words:

"Sell May at one-fifty."

Going was for the moment touching elbows with Kimbark on one side and with Merriam on the other, all three belonging to the "Hornung crowd." Their answering challenge of "*Sold*" was as the voice of one man. They did not pause to reflect upon the strangeness of the circumstance. (That was for afterward.) Their response to the offer was as unconscious as reflex action and almost as rapid, and before the pit was well aware of what had happened the transaction of one thousand bushels was down upon Going's trading-card and fifteen hundred dollars had changed hands. But here was a marvel—the whole available supply of wheat cornered,

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Hornung master of the situation, invincible, unassailable; yet behold a man willing to sell, a bear bold enough to raise his head.

"That was Kennedy, wasn't it, who made that offer?" asked Kimbark, as Going noted down the trade—"Kennedy, that new man?"

"Yes; who do you suppose he's selling for; who's willing to go short at this stage of the game?"

"Maybe he ain't short."

"Short! Great heavens, man; where'd he get the stuff?"

"Blamed if I know. We can account for every handful of May. Steady! Oh, there he goes again."

"Sell a thousand May at one-fifty," vociferated the bear-broker, throwing out his hand, one finger raised to indicate the number of "contracts" offered. This time it was evident that he was attacking the Hornung crowd deliberately, for, ignoring the jam of traders that swept toward him, he looked across the pit to where Going and Kimbark were shouting "*Sold! Sold!*" and nodded his head.

A second time Going made memoranda of the trade, and either the Hornung holdings were increased by two thousand bushels of May wheat or the Hornung bank account swelled by at least three thousand dollars of some unknown short's money.

Of late—so sure was the bull crowd of its position—no one had even thought of glancing at the inspection sheet on the bulletin board. But now one of Going's messengers hurried up to him with the announcement that this sheet showed receipts at Chicago for that morning of twenty-five thousand bushels, and not credited to Hornung. Someone had got hold of a line of wheat overlooked by the "clique" and was dumping it upon them.

Wire the Chief, said Going over his shoulder to

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Merriam. This one struggled out of the crowd, and on a telegraph blank scribbled:

"Strong bear movement—New man—Kennedy—Selling in lots of five contracts—Chicago receipts twenty-five thousand."

The message was despatched, and in a few moments the answer came back, laconic, of military terseness:

"Support the market."

And Going obeyed, Merriam and Kimbark following, the new broker fairly throwing the wheat at them in thousand-bushel lots.

"Sell May at 'fifty; sell May; sell May." A moment's indecision, an instant's hesitation, the first faint suggestion of weakness, and the market would have broken under them. But for the better part of four hours they stood their ground, taking all that was offered, in constant communication with the Chief, and from time to time stimulated and steadied by his brief, unvarying command:

"Support the market."

At the close of the session they had bought in the twenty-five thousand bushels of May. Hornung's position was as stable as a rock, and the price closed even with the opening figure—one dollar and a half.

But the morning's work was the talk of all La Salle Street. Who was back of the raid? What was the meaning of this unexpected selling? For weeks the pit trading had been merely nominal. Truslow, the Great Bear, from whom the most serious attack might have been expected, had gone to his country seat at Geneva Lake, in Wisconsin, declaring himself to be out of the market entirely. He went bass-fishing every day.

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IV

THE BELT LINE

On a certain day toward the middle of the month, at a time when the mysterious Bear had unloaded some eighty thousand bushels upon Hornung, a conference was held in the library of Hornung's home. His broker attended it, and also a clean-faced, bright-eyed individual whose name of Cyrus Ryder might have been found upon the pay-roll of a rather well-known detective agency. For upward of half an hour after the conference began the detective spoke, the other two listening attentively, gravely.

"Then, last of all," concluded Ryder, "I made out I was a hobo, and began stealing rides on the Belt Line Railroad. Know the road? It just circles Chicago. Truslow owns it. Yes? Well, then I began to catch on. I noticed that cars of certain numbers—thirty-one nought thirty-four, thirty-two one ninety—well, the numbers don't matter, but anyhow, these cars were always switched onto the sidings by Mr. Truslow's main elevator D soon as they came in. The wheat was shunted in, and they were pulled out again. Well, I spotted one car and stole a ride on her. Say, look here, *that car went right around the city on the Belt, and came back to D again, and the same wheat in her all the time.* The grain was re-inspected—it was raw, I tell you—and the warehouse receipts made out just as though the stuff had come in from Kansas or Iowa."

"The same wheat all the time!" interrupted Hornung.

"The same wheat—your wheat, that you sold to Truslow."

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Hornung's broker. "Truslow never took it abroad at all."

"Took it abroad! Say, he's just been running it around

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Chicago, like the supers in ‘Shenandoah,’ round an’ round, so you’d think it was a new lot, an’ selling it back to you again.”

“No wonder we couldn’t account for so much wheat.”

“Bought it from us at one-ten, and made us buy it back—our own wheat—at one-fifty.”

Hornung and his broker looked at each other in silence for a moment. Then all at once Hornung struck the arm of his chair with his fist and exploded in a roar of laughter. The broker stared for one bewildered moment, then followed his example.

“Sold! Sold!” shouted Hornung almost gleefully. “Upon my soul it’s as good as a Gilbert and Sullivan show. And we—— Oh, Lord! Billy, shake on it, and hats off to my distinguished friend, Truslow. He’ll be President some day. Hey! What? Prosecute him? Not I.”

“He’s done us out of a neat hatful of dollars for all that,” observed the broker, suddenly grave.

“Billy, it’s worth the price.”

“We’ve got to make it up somehow.”

“Well, tell you what. We were going to boost the price to one seventy-five next week, and make that our settlement figure.”

“Can’t do it now. Can’t afford it.”

“No. Here; we’ll let out a big link; we’ll put wheat at two dollars, and let it go at that.”

“Two it is, then,” said the broker.

v

THE BREAD LINE

The street was very dark and absolutely deserted. It was a district on the “South Side,” not far from the Chicago River, given up largely to wholesale stores, and after nightfall was empty of all life. The echoes slept

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but lightly hereabouts, and the slightest footfall, the faintest noise, woke them upon the instant and sent them clamouring up and down the length of the pavement between the iron-shuttered fronts. The only light visible came from the side door of a certain "Vienna" bakery, where at one o'clock in the morning loaves of bread were given away to any who should ask. Every evening about nine o'clock the outcasts began to gather about the side door. The stragglers came in rapidly, and the line—the "bread line," as it was called—began to form. By midnight it was usually some hundred yards in length, stretching almost the entire length of the block.

Toward ten in the evening, his coat collar turned up against the fine drizzle that pervaded the air, his hands in his pockets, his elbows gripping his sides, Sam Lewiston came up and silently took his place at the end of the line.

Unable to conduct his farm upon a paying basis at the time when Truslow, the "Great Bear," had sent the price of grain down to sixty-two cents a bushel, Lewiston had turned over his entire property to his creditors, and, leaving Kansas for good, had abandoned farming, and had left his wife at her sister's boarding-house in Topeka with the understanding that she was to join him in Chicago as soon as he had found a steady job. Then he had come to Chicago and had turned workman. His brother Joe conducted a small hat factory on Archer Avenue, and for a time he found there a meagre employment. But difficulties had occurred, times were bad, the hat factory was involved in debts, the repealing of a certain import duty on manufactured felt overcrowded the home market with cheap Belgian and French products, and in the end his brother had assigned and gone to Milwaukee.

Thrown out of work, Lewiston drifted aimlessly about

Chicago, from pillar to post, working a little, earning here a dollar, there a dime, but always sinking, sinking, till at last the ooze of the lowest bottom dragged at his feet and the rush of the great ebb went over him and engulfed him and shut him out from the light, and a park bench became his home and the "bread line" his chief makeshift of subsistence.

He stood now in the enfolding drizzle, sodden, stupefied with fatigue. Before and behind stretched the line. There was no talking. There was no sound. The street was empty. It was still that the passing of a cable-car in the adjoining thoroughfare grated like prolonged rolling explosions, beginning and ending at immeasurable distances. The drizzle descended incessantly. After a long time midnight struck.

There was something ominous and gravely impressive in this interminable line of dark figures, close-pressed, soundless; a crowd, yet absolutely still; a close-packed, silent file, waiting, waiting in the vast deserted night-ridden street; waiting without a word, without a movement, there under the night and under the slow-moving mists of rain.

Few in the crowd were professional beggars. Most of them were workmen, long since out of work, forced into idleness by long-continued "hard times," by ill luck, by sickness. To them the "bread line" was a godsend. At least they could not starve. Between jobs here in the end was something to hold them up—a small platform, as it were, above the sweep of black water, where for a moment they might pause and take breath before the plunge.

The period of waiting on this night of rain seemed endless to those silent, hungry men; but at length there was a stir. The line moved. The side door opened. Ah, at last! They were going to hand out the bread.

But instead of the usual white-aproned undercook

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with his crowded hampers there now appeared in the doorway a new man—a young fellow who looked like a bookkeeper's assistant. He bore in his hand a placard, which he tacked to the outside of the door. Then he disappeared within the bakery, locking the door after him.

A shudder of poignant despair, an unformed, inarticulate sense of calamity, seemed to run from end to end of the line. What had happened? Those in the rear, unable to read the placard, surged forward, a sense of bitter disappointment clutching at their hearts.

The line broke up, disintegrated into a shapeless throng—a throng that crowded forward and collected in front of the shut door whereon the placard was affixed. Lewiston, with the others, pushed forward. On the placard he read these words:

"Owing to the fact that the price of grain has been increased to two dollars a bushel, there will be no distribution of bread from this bakery until further notice."

Lewiston turned away, dumb, bewildered. Till morning he walked the streets, going on without purpose, without direction. But now at last his luck had turned. Overnight the wheel of his fortunes had creaked and swung upon its axis, and before noon he had found a job in the street-cleaning brigade. In the course of time he rose to be first shift-boss, then deputy inspector, then inspector, promoted to the dignity of driving in a red wagon with rubber tires and drawing a salary instead of mere wages. The wife was sent for and a new start made.

But Lewiston never forgot. Dimly he began to see the significance of things. Caught once in the cogs and wheels of a great and terrible engine, he had seen—none better—its workings. Of all the men who had vainly stood in the "bread line" on that rainy night in early summer, he, perhaps, had been the only one who had struggled up to the surface again. How many others had

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gone down in the great ebb? Grim question; he dared not think how many.

He had seen the two ends of a great wheat operation—a battle between Bear and Bull. The stories (subsequently published in the city's press) of Truslow's countermove in selling Hornung his own wheat, supplied the unseen section. The farmer—he who raised the wheat—was ruined upon one hand; the working-man—he who consumed it—was ruined upon the other. But between the two, the great operators, who never saw the wheat they traded in, bought and sold the world's food, gambled in the nourishment of entire nations, practised their tricks, their chicanery and oblique shifty "deals," were reconciled in their differences, and went on through their appointed way, jovial, contented, enthroned, and unassailable.

THE WIFE OF CHINO

I

CHINO'S WIFE

ON THE back porch of the "office," young Lockwood—his boots, stained with the mud of the mines and with candle-drippings, on the rail—sat smoking his pipe and looking off down the canyon.

It was early in the evening. Lockwood, because he had heard the laughter and horseplay of the men of the night shift as they went down the canyon from the bunk-house to the tunnel-mouth, knew that it was a little after seven. It would not be necessary to go indoors and begin work on the columns of figures of his pay-roll for another hour yet. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, refilled and lighted it—stoppering with his match-box—and shot a wavering blue wreath out over the porch railing. Then he resettled himself in his tilted chair, hooked his thumbs into his belt, and fetched a long breath.

For the last few moments he had been considering, in that comfortable spirit of relaxed attention that comes with the after-dinner tobacco, two subjects: first, the beauty of the evening; second, the temperament, character, and appearance of Felice Zavalla.

As for the evening, there could be no two opinions about that. It was charming. The Hand-over-fist Gravel Mine, though not in the higher Sierras, was sufficiently above the level of the mere foot-hills to be in the sphere of influence of the greater mountains. Also, it was re-

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mote, difficult of access. Iowa Hill, the nearest post-office, was a good eight miles distant, by trail, across the Indian River. It was sixteen miles by stage from Iowa Hill to Colfax, on the line of the Overland Railroad, and all of a hundred miles from Colfax to San Francisco.

To Lockwood's mind this isolation was in itself an attraction. Tucked away in this fold of the Sierras, forgotten, remote, the little community of a hundred souls that comprised the *personnel* of the Hand-over-fist lived out its life with the completeness of an independent State, having its own government, its own institutions and customs. Besides all this, it had its own dramas as well—little complications that developed with the swiftness of whirlpools, and that trended toward culmination with true Western directness. Lockwood, college-bred—he was a graduate of the Columbia School of Mines—found the life interesting.

On this particular evening he sat over his pipe rather longer than usual, seduced by the beauty of the scene and the moment. It was very quiet. The prolonged rumble of the mine's stamp-mill came to his ears in a ceaseless diapason, but the sound was so much a matter of course that Lockwood no longer heard it. The millions of pines and redwoods that covered the flanks of the mountains were absolutely still. No wind was stirring in their needles. But the chorus of tree-toads, dry, staccato, was as incessant as the pounding of the mill. Far-off—thousands of miles, it seemed—an owl was hooting, three velvet-soft notes at exact intervals. A cow in the stable near at hand lay down with a long breath, while from the back veranda of Chino Zavalla's cabin came the clear voice of Felice singing "The Spanish Cavalier" while she washed the dishes.

The twilight was fading; the glory that had blazed in cloudless vermillion and gold over the divide was dying down like receding music. The mountains were

purple-black. From the canyon rose the night mist, pale blue, while above it stood the smoke from the mill, a motionless plume of sable, shot through by the last ruddiness of the afterglow.

The air was full of pleasant odours—the smell of wood fires from the cabins of the married men and from the ovens of the cookhouse, the ammoniacal whiffs from the stables, the smell of ripening apples from “Boston’s” orchard—while over all and through all came the perfume of the witch-hazel and tarweed from the forests and mountain sides, as pungent as myrrh, as aromatic as aloes.

“And if I should fall,
In vain I would call,”

sang Felice.

Lockwood took his pipe from his teeth and put back his head to listen. Felice had as good a voice as so pretty a young woman should have had. She was twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and was uncontestedly the beauty of the camp. She was Mexican-Spanish, tall and very slender, black-haired, as lithe as a cat, with a cat’s green eyes and with all of a cat’s purring, ingratiating insinuation.

Lockwood could not have told exactly just how the first familiarity between him and Felice had arisen. It had grown by almost imperceptible degrees up to a certain point; now it was a chance meeting on the trail between the office and the mill, now a fragment of conversation apropos of a letter to be mailed, now a question as to some regulation of the camp, now a detail of repairs done to the cabin wherein Felice lived. As said above, up to a certain point the process of “getting acquainted” had been gradual, and on Lockwood’s part unconscious; but beyond that point affairs had progressed rapidly.

At first Felice had been, for Lockwood, a pretty woman, neither more nor less; but by degrees she emerged from this vague classification: she became a very pretty woman. Then she became a personality; she occupied a place within the circle which Lockwood called his world, his life. For the past months this place had, perforce, to be enlarged. Lockwood allowed it to expand. To make room for Felice, he thrust aside, or allowed the idea of Felice to thrust aside, other objects which long had sat secure. The invasion of the woman into the sphere of his existence developed at the end into a thing veritably headlong. Deep-seated convictions, old-established beliefs and ideals, even the two landmarks right and wrong, were hustled and shouldered about as the invasion widened and penetrated. This state of affairs was further complicated by the fact that Felice was the wife of Chino Zavalla, shift-boss of No. 4 gang in the new workings.

II

MADNESS

It was quite possible that, though Lockwood could not have told when and how the acquaintance between him and Felice began and progressed, the young woman herself could. But this is guesswork. Felice being a woman, and part Spanish at that, was vastly more self-conscious, more disingenuous, than the man, the Anglo-Saxon. Also she had that fearlessness that very pretty women have. In her more refined and city-bred sisters this fearlessness would be called poise, or, at the most, "cheek."

And she was quite capable of making young Lockwood, the superintendent, her employer, and nominally the ruler of her little world, fall in love with her. It is only fair to Felice to say that she would not do this

deliberately. She would be more conscious of the business than the man, than Lockwood; but in affairs such as this, involving women like Felice, there is a distinction between deliberately doing a thing and consciously doing it. Admittedly this is complicated, but it must be understood that Felice herself was complex, and she could no more help attracting men to her than the magnet the steel filings. It made no difference whether the man was the "breed" boy who split logging down by the engine-house or the young superintendent with his college education, his white hands and dominating position; over each and all who came within range of her influence Felice, with her black hair and green eyes, her slim figure and her certain indefinite "cheek"—which must not by any manner of means be considered as "boldness"—cast the weird of her kind.

If one understood her kind, knew how to make allowances, knew just how seriously to take her eyes and her "cheek," no great harm was done. Otherwise, consequences were very apt to follow.

Hicks was one of those who from the very first had understood. Hicks was the manager of the mine, and Lockwood's chief—in a word, *the boss*. He was younger even than Lockwood, a boy virtually, but a wonderful boy—a boy such as only America, western America at that, could produce, masterful, self-controlled, incredibly capable, as taciturn as a sphinx, strong of mind and of muscle, and possessed of a cold grey eye that was as penetrating as chilled steel.

To this person, impersonal as force itself, Felice had once, by some mysterious feminine art, addressed, in all innocence, her little manœuvre of fascination. One lift of the steady eyelid, one quiet glint of that terrible cold grey eye, that poniarded her every tissue of complexity, inconsistency, and coquetry, had been enough. Felice had fled the field from this young fellow, so much her

junior, and then afterward, in a tremor of discomfiture and distress, had kept her distance.

Hicks understood Felice. Also the great majority of the miners—shift-bosses, chuck-tenders, bed-rock cleaners, and the like—understood. Lockwood did not.

It may appear difficult of belief that the men, the crude, simple workmen, knew how to take Felice Zavalla while Lockwood, with all his education and superior intelligence, failed in his estimate of her. The explanation lies no doubt in the fact that in these man-and-woman affairs instinct is a surer guide than education and intelligence, unless, indeed, the intelligence is preternaturally keen. Lockwood's student life had benumbed the elemental instinct, which in the miners, the "men," yet remained vigorous and unblunted, and by means of which they assessed Felice and her harmless blandishments at their true worth. For all Lockwood's culture, his own chuck-tenders, unlettered fellows, cumbersome, slow-witted, "knew women"—at least, women of their own world, like Felice—better than he. On the other hand, his intelligence was no such perfected instrument as Hicks's, as exact as logarithms, as penetrating as a scalpel, as uncoloured by emotions as a steel trap.

Lockwood's life had been a narrow one. He had studied too hard at Columbia to see much of the outside world, and he had come straight from his graduation to take his first position. Since then his life had been spent virtually in the wilderness, now in Utah, now in Arizona, now in British Columbia, and now, at last, in Placer County, California. His lot was the common lot of young mining engineers. It might lead one day to great wealth, but meanwhile it was terribly isolated.

Living thus apart from the world, Lockwood very easily allowed his judgment to get, as it were, out of perspective. Class distinctions lost their sharpness, and

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one woman—as, for instance, Felice—was very like another—as, for instance, the girls his sisters knew “back home” in New York.

As a last result, the passions were strong. Things were done “for all they were worth” in Placer County, California. When a man worked, he worked hard; when he slept, he slept soundly; when he hated, he hated with primeval intensity; and when he loved he grew reckless.

It was all one that Felice was Chino’s wife. Lockwood swore between his teeth that she should be *his* wife. He had arrived at this conclusion on the night that he sat on the back porch of his office and watched the moon coming up over the Hog Back. He stood up at length and thrust his pipe into his pocket, and putting an arm across the porch pillar, leaned his forehead against it and looked out far in the purple shadows.

“It’s madness,” he muttered; “yet, I know it—sheer madness; but, by the Lord! I *am* mad—and I don’t care.”

III

CHINO GOES TO TOWN

As time went on the matter became more involved. Hicks was away. Chino Zavalla, stolid, easy-going, came and went about his work on the night shift, always touching his cap to Lockwood when the two crossed each other’s paths, always good-natured, always respectful, seeing nothing but his work.

Every evening, when not otherwise engaged, Lockwood threw a saddle over one of the horses and rode in to Iowa Hill for the mail, returning to the mine between ten and eleven. On one of these occasions, as he drew near to Chino’s cabin, a slim figure came toward him down the road and paused at his horse’s head. Then he was surprised to hear Felice’s voice asking, “Ave you a letter for me, then, Meester Lockwude?”

Felice made an excuse of asking thus for her mail each night that Lockwood came from town, and for a month they kept up appearances; but after that they dropped even that pretense, and as often as he met her Lockwood dismounted and walked by her side till the light in the cabin came into view through the chaparral.

At length Lockwood made a mighty effort. He knew how very far he had gone beyond the point where between the two landmarks called right and wrong a line is drawn. He contrived to keep away from Felice. He sent one of the men into town for the mail, and he found reasons to be in the mine itself whole half-days at a time. Whenever a moment's leisure impended, he took his shotgun and tramped the mine ditch for leagues, looking for quail and grey squirrels. For three weeks he so managed that he never once caught sight of Felice's black hair and green eyes, never once heard the sound of her singing.

But the madness was upon him none the less, and it rode and rowelled him like a hag from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn again, till in his complete loneliness, in the isolation of that simple, primitive life, where no congenial mind relieved the monotony by so much as a word, morbid, hounded, tortured, the man grew desperate—was ready for anything that would solve the situation.

Once every two weeks Lockwood "cleaned up and amalgamated"—that is to say, the mill was stopped and the "ripples" where the gold was caught were scraped clean. Then the ore was sifted out, melted down, and poured into the mould, whence it emerged as the "brick," a dun-coloured rectangle, rough-edged, immensely heavy, which represented anywhere from two to six thousand dollars. This was sent down by express to the smelting-house.

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But it was necessary to take the brick from the mine to the express office at Iowa Hill.

This duty devolved upon Lockwood and Chino Zavalla. Hicks had from the very first ordered that the Spaniard should accompany the superintendent upon this mission. Zavalla was absolutely trustworthy, as honest as the daylight, strong physically, cool-headed, discreet, and—to Hicks's mind a crowning recommendation—close-mouthed. For about the mine it was never known when the brick went to town or who took it. Hicks had impressed this fact upon Zavalla. He was to tell nobody that he was delegated to this duty. "Not even"—Hicks had levelled a forefinger at Chino, and the cold eyes drove home the injunction as the steam-hammer drives the rivet—"not even your wife." And Zavalla had promised. He would have trifled with dynamite sooner than with one of Hicks's orders.

So the fortnightly trips to town in company with Lockwood were explained in various fashions to Felice. She never knew that the mail-bag strapped to her husband's shoulders on those occasions carried some five thousand dollars' worth of bullion.

On a certain Friday in early June Lockwood had amalgamated, and the brick, duly stamped, lay in the safe in the office. The following night he and Chino, who was relieved from mine duty on these occasions, were to take it in to Iowa Hill.

Late Saturday afternoon, however, the engineer's boy brought word to Chino that the superintendent wanted him at once. Chino found Lockwood lying upon the old lounge in the middle room of the office, his foot in bandages.

"Here's luck, Chino," he exclaimed, as the Mexican paused on the threshold. "Come in and—shut the door," he added in a lower voice.

"*Dios!*" murmured Chino. "An accident?"

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"Rather," growled Lockwood. "That fool boy, Davis's kid—the car-boy, you know—ran me down in the mine. I yelled at him. Somehow he couldn't stop. Two wheels went over my foot—and the car loaded, too."

Chino shuddered politely.

"Now here's the point," continued Lockwood. "Um—there's nobody round outside there? Take a look, Chino, by the window there. All clear, eh? Well, here's the point. That brick ought to go in to-night just the same, hey?"

"Oh—of a surety, of a surety." Chino spoke in Spanish.

"Now I don't want to let anyone else take my place—you never can tell—the beggars will talk. Not all like you, Chino."

"*Gracias, señor. It is an honour.*"

"Do you think you can manage alone? I guess you can, hey? No reason why you couldn't."

Chino shut his eyes tight and put up a palm. "Rest assured of that, *Señor Lockwude*. Rest assured of that."

"Well, get around here about nine."

"It is understood, *señor.*"

Lockwood, who had a passable knowledge of telegraphy, had wired to the Hill for the doctor. About suppertime one appeared, and Lockwood bore the pain of the setting with such fortitude as he could command. He had his supper served in the office. The doctor shared it with him and kept him company.

During the early hours of the evening Lockwood lay on the sofa trying to forget the pain. There was no easier way of doing this than by thinking of Felice. Inevitably his thoughts reverted to her. Now that he was helpless, he could secure no diversion by plunging into the tunnel, giving up his mind to his work. He could not

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now take down his gun and tramp the ditch. Now he was supine, and the longing to break through the mesh, wrestle free from the complication, gripped him and racked him with all its old-time force.

Promptly at nine o'clock the faithful Chino presented himself at the office. He had one of the two horses that were used by Lockwood as saddle animals, and as he entered he opened his coat and tapped the hilt of a pistol showing from his trousers pocket, with a wink and a grin. Lockwood took the brick from the safe, strapped it into the mail-bag, and Chino, swinging it across his shoulders, was gone, leaving Lockwood to hop back to the sofa, there to throw himself down and face once more his trouble.

IV

A DISPATCH FROM THE EXPRESS MESSENGER

What made it harder for Lockwood just now was that even on that very day, in spite of all precaution, in spite of all good resolutions, he had at last seen Felice. Doubtless the young woman herself had contrived it; but, be that as it may, Lockwood, returning from a tour of inspection along the ditch, came upon her not far from camp, but in a remote corner, and she had of course demanded why he kept away from her. What Lockwood said in response he could not now remember; nor, for that matter, was any part of the conversation very clear to his memory. The reason for this was that, just as he was leaving her, something of more importance than conversation had happened. Felice had looked at him.

And she had so timed her look, had so insinuated it into the little, brief, significant silences between their words, that its meaning had been very clear. Lockwood had left her with his brain dizzy, his teeth set, his feet

stumbling and fumbling down the trail, for now he knew that Felice wanted him to know that she regretted the circumstance of her marriage to Chino Zavalla; he knew that she wanted him to know that the situation was as intolerable for her as for him.

All the rest of the day, even at this moment, in fact, this new phase of the affair intruded its pregnant suggestions upon his mind, to the exclusion of everything else. He felt the drift strong around him; he knew that in the end he would resign himself to it. At the same time he sensed the abyss, felt the nearness of some dreadful, nameless cataclysm, a thing of black shadow, bottomless, terrifying.

"Lord!" he murmured, as he drew his hand across his forehead, "Lord! I wonder where this thing is going to fetch up."

As he spoke, the telegraph key on his desk, near at hand, began all at once to click off his call. Groaning and grumbling, Lockwood heaved himself up, and, with his right leg bent, hobbled from chair-back to chair-back over to the desk. He rested his right knee on his desk chair, reached for his key, opened the circuit, and answered. There was an instant's pause, then the instrument began to click again. The message was from the express messenger at Iowa Hill. Word by word Lockwood took it off as follows:

Reno—Kid—will—attempt—hold-up—of—brick—on—trail—to-night—do—not—send—till—advised—at—this—end.

Lockwood let go the key and jumped back from the desk, lips compressed, eyes alight, his fists clenched till the knuckles grew white. The whole figure of him stiffened as tense as drawn wire, braced rigid like a finely bred hound "making game."

Chino was already half an hour gone by the trail, and the Reno Kid was a desperado of the deadliest breed

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known to the West. How he came to turn up here there was no time to inquire. He was on hand, that was the point; and Reno Kid always "shot to kill." This would be no mere hold-up; it would be murder.

Just then, as Lockwood snatched open a certain drawer of his desk where he kept his revolver, he heard from down the road, in the direction of Chino's cabin, Felice's voice singing:

"To the war I must go,
To fight for my country and you, dear."

Lockwood stopped short, his arm at full stretch, still gripping tight the revolver that he had half pulled from the drawer—stopped short and listened.

The solution of everything had come.

He saw it in a flash. The knife hung poised over the knot—even at that moment was falling. Nothing was asked of him—nothing but inertia.

For an instant, alone there in that isolated mining-camp, high above the world, lost and forgotten in the gloom of the canyons and redwoods, Lockwood heard the crisis of his life come crashing through the air upon him like the onslaught of a whirlwind. For an instant, and no more, he considered. Then he cried aloud:

"No, no; I can't, I *can't*—not this way!" And with the words he threw the belt of the revolver about his hips and limped and scampered from the room, drawing the buckle close.

How he gained the stable he never knew, nor how he backed the horse from the building, nor how, hopping on one leg, he got the headstall on and drew the cinches tight.

But the wrench of pain in his foot as, swinging up at last, he tried to catch his off stirrup was reality enough to clear any confusion of spirit. Hanging on as best he might with his knees and one foot, Lockwood, threshing

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the horse's flanks with the stinging quirt that tapered from the reins of the bridle, shot from the camp in a swirl of clattering hoofs, flying pebbles, and blinding clouds of dust.

v

THE TRAIL

The night was black dark under the redwoods, so impenetrable that he could not see his horse's head, and braced even as he was for greater perils it required all his courage to ride top-speed at this vast slab of black that like a wall he seemed to charge head down with every leap of his bronco's hoofs.

For the first half-hour the trail mounted steadily, then, by the old gravel-pits, it topped the divide and swung down over more open slopes, covered only with chaparral and second growths. Here it was lighter, and Lockwood uttered a fervent "Thank God!" when, a few moments later, the moon shouldered over the mountain crests ahead of him and melted the black shadows to silver-grey. Beyond the gravel-pits the trail turned and followed the flank of the slope, level here for nearly a mile. Lockwood set his teeth against the agony of his foot and gave the bronco the quirt with all his strength.

In another half-hour he had passed Cold Cañon, and twenty minutes after that had begun the descent into Indian River. He forded the river at a gallop, and, with the water dripping from his very hat-brim, drove labouring under the farther slope.

Then he drew rein with a cry of bewilderment and apprehension. The lights of Iowa Hill were not two hundred yards distant. He had covered the whole distance from the mine, and where was Chino?

There was but one answer: back there along the trail somewhere, at some point by which Lockwood had

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galloped headlong and unheeding, lying up there in the chaparral with Reno's bullets in his body.

There was no time now to go on to the Hill. Chino, if he was not past help, needed it without an instant's loss of time. Lockwood spun the horse about. Once more the ford, once more the canyon slopes, once more the sharp turn by Cold Cañon, once more the thick darkness under the redwoods. Steadily he galloped on, searching the roadside.

Then all at once he reined in sharply, bringing the horse to a standstill, one ear turned down the wind. The night's silence was broken by a multitude of sound—the laboured breathing of the spent bronco, the saddle creaking as the dripping flanks rose and fell, the touch of wind in the tree-tops and the chorusing of the myriad tree-toads. But through all these, distinct, as precise as a clock-tick, Lockwood had heard, and yet distinguished, the click of a horse's hoof drawing near, and the horse was at a gallop: Reno at last.

Lockwood drew his pistol. He stood in thick shadow. Only some twenty yards in front of him was there any faintest break in the darkness; but at that point the blurred moonlight made a greyness across the trail, just a tone less deep than the redwoods' shadows.

With his revolver cocked and trained upon this patch of greyness, Lockwood waited, holding his breath.

The gallop came blundering on, sounding in the night's silence as loud as the passage of an express train; and the echo of it, flung back from the canyon side, confused it and distorted it till, to Lockwood's morbid alertness, it seemed fraught with all the madness of flight, all the hurry of desperation.

Then the hoof-beats rose to a roar, and a shadow just darker than the darkness heaved against the greyness that Lockwood held covered with his pistol. Instantly he shouted aloud:

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"Halt! Throw up your hands!"

His answer was a pistol shot.

He dug his heels to his horse, firing as the animal leaped forward. The horses crashed together, rearing, plunging, and Lockwood, as he felt the body of a man crush by him on the trail, clutched into the clothes of him, and, with the pistol pressed against the very flesh, fired again, crying out as he did so:

"Drop your gun, Reno! I know you. I'll kill you if you move again!"

And then it was that a wail rose into the night, a wail of agony and mortal apprehension:

"Señor Lockwude, Señor Lockwude, for the love of God, don't shoot! 'Tis I—Chino Zavalla."

VI

THE DISCOVERY OF FELICE

An hour later, Felice, roused from her sleep by loud knocking upon her door, threw a blanket about her slim body, serape fashion, and opened the cabin to two gaunt scarecrows, who, the one, half supported by the other, himself far spent and all but swooning, lurched by her across the threshold and brought up wavering and bloody in the midst of the cabin floor.

"*Por Dios! Por Dios!*" cried Felice. "Ah, love of God! what misfortune has befallen Chino!" Then in English, and with a swift leap of surprise and dismay: "Ah, Meester Lockwude, air you hurt? Eh, tell me-a! Ah, it is too draidful!"

"No, no," gasped Lockwood, as he dragged Chino's unconscious body to the bed Felice had just left. "No; I—I've shot him. We met—there on the trail." Then the nerves that had stood strain already surprisingly long snapped and crisped back upon themselves like broken harp-strings.

THE WIFE OF CHINO

"*I've shot him! I've shot him!*" he cried. "Shot him, do you understand? Killed him, it may be. Get the doctor, quick! He's at the office. I passed Chino on the trail over to the Hill. He'd hid in the bushes as he heard me coming from behind, then when I came back I took him. Oh, I'll explain later. Get the doctor, quick."

Felice threw on such clothes as came to her hand and ran over to the office, returning with the doctor, half dressed and blinking in the lantern-light. He went in to the wounded man at once, and Lockwood, at the end of all strength, dropped into the hammock on the porch, stretching out his leg to ease the anguish of his broken foot. He leaned back and closed his eyes wearily, aware only of a hideous swirl of pain, of intolerable anxiety as to Chino's wound, and, most of all, of a mere blur of confusion wherein the sights and sounds of the last few hours tore through his brain with the plunge of a wild galloping such as seemed to have been in his ears for years and years.

But as he lay thus he heard a step at his side. Then came the touch of Felice's long brown hand upon his face. He sat up, opening his eyes.

"You ask me-a," she said, "eef I do onderstaind, eh? Yais, I onderstaind. You—" her voice was a whisper—"you shoot Chino, eh? I know. You do those thing' for me-a. I am note angri, no-a. You ver' sharp man, eh? All for love oaf Felice, eh? Now we be happi, maybe; now we git married soam day byne-by, eh? Ah, you one brave man, Señor Lockwude!"

She would have taken his hand, but Lockwood, the pain all forgot, the confusion all vanishing, was on his feet. It was as though a curtain that for months had hung between him and the blessed light of clear understanding had suddenly been rent in twain by her words. The woman stood revealed. All the baseness of her tribe, all the degraded savagery of a degenerate race, all the

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capabilities for wrong, for sordid treachery, that lay dormant in her, leaped to life at this unguarded moment, and in that new light, that now at last she had herself let in, stood pitilessly revealed, a loathsome thing, hateful as malevolence itself.

"What," shouted Lockwood, "you think—think that I—that I *could*—oh-h, it's monstrous—you—" He could find no words to voice his loathing. Swiftly he turned away from her, the last spark of an evil love dying down forever in his breast.

It was a transformation, a thing as sudden as a miracle, as conclusive as a miracle, and with all a miracle's sense of uplift and power. In a second of time the scales seemed to fall from the man's eyes, fetters from his limbs; he saw, and he was free.

At the door Lockwood met the doctor.

"Well?"

"He's all right; only a superficial wound. He'll recover. But you—how about you? All right? Well, that is a good hearing. You've had a lucky escape, my boy."

"I *have* had a lucky escape," shouted Lockwood. "You don't know just how lucky it was."

A BARGAIN WITH PEG-LEG

HEY, youse!" shouted the car-boy. He brought his trundling, jolting, loose-jointed car to a halt by the face of the drift. "Hey, youse!" he shouted again.

Bunt shut off the burly air-drill and nodded.

"Chaw," he remarked to me.

We clambered into the car, and, as the boy released the brake, rolled out into the main tunnel of the Big Dipple, and banged and bumped down the long incline that led to the mouth.

"Chaw" was dinner. It was one o'clock in the morning, and the men on the night shift were taking their midnight spell off. Bunt was back at his old occupation of miner, and I—the one loafer of all that little world of workers—had brought him a bottle of beer to go with the "chaw"; for Bunt and I were ancient friends.

As we emerged from the cool, cave-like dampness of the mine and ran out into the wonderful night air of the Sierra foothills, warm, dry, redolent of witch-hazel, the car-boy began to cough, and, after we had climbed out of the car and had sat down on the embankment to eat and drink, Bunt observed:

"D'ye hear that bark? That kid's a one-lunger for fair. Which ain't no salubrious graft for him—this hiking cars about in the bowels of the earth. Some day he'll sure up an' quit. Ought to go down to Yuma a spell."

The engineer in the mill was starting the stamps. They got under way with broken, hiccupping dislocations, bumping and stumbling like the hoofs of a group of horses on the cattle-deck in a gale. Then they jumped to a trot, then to a canter, and at last settled down to the

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prolonged roaring gallop that reverberated far off over the entire canyon.

"I knew a one-lunger once," Bunt continued, as he uncorked the bottle, "and the acquaintance was some distressful by reason of its bringing me into strained relations with a cow-rustlin', hair-liftin', only-one-born-in-captivity, man-eatin' brute of a one-legged Greaser which he was named Peg-leg Smith. He was shy a leg because of a shotgun that the other man thought wasn't loaded. And this here happens, lemme tell you, 'way down in the Panamint country, where they wasn't no doctor within twenty miles, and Peg-leg outs with his bowie and amputates that leg hisself, then later makes a wood stump outa a ole halter and a table-leg. I guess the whole jing-bang of it turned his head, for he goes bad and loco thereafter, and begins shootin' and r'arin' up an' down the hull Southwest, a-roarin' and a-bellerin' and a-takin' on amazin'. We dasn't say boo to a yaller pup while he's round. I never see such mean blood. Jus' let the boys know that Peg-leg was anyways adjacent an' you can gamble they walked chalk.

"Y'see, this Peg-leg lay it out as how he couldn't abide no cussin' an' swearin'. He said if there was any tall talkin' done he wanted to do it. And he sure could. I've seed him hold on for six minutes by the watch an' never repeat hisself once. An' shoot! Say, lemme tell you he did for two Greasers once in a barroom at La Paz, one in front o' him, t'other straight behind, *him* standing between with a gun in each hand, and shootin' both guns *at the same time*. Well, he was just a terror," declared Bunt, solemnly, "and when he was in real good form there wa'n't a man south o' Leadville dared to call his hand.

"Now, the way I met up with this skunkin' little dew-drop was this-like. It was at Yuma, at a time when I was a kid of about nineteen. It was a Sunday mornin';

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Peg-leg was in town. He was asleep on a lounge in the back room o' Bud Overick's Grand Transcontinental Hotel. (I used to guess Bud called it that by reason that it wa'n't grand, nor transcontinental, nor yet a hotel—it was a bar.) This was twenty year ago, and in those days I knowed a one-lunger in Yuma named Clarence. (He couldn't help that—he was a good kid—but his name *was* Clarence.) We got along first-rate. Yuma was a great consumptive place at that time. They used to come in on every train; yes, and go out, too—by freight.

"Well, findin' that they couldn't do much else than jes' sit around an' bark and keep their shawls tight, these 'ere chaps kinda drew together, and lay it out to meet every Sunday morning at Bud's to sorta talk it over and have a quiet game. One game they had that they played steady, an' when I drifted into Bud's that morning they was about a dozen of 'em at it—Clarence, too. When I came in, there they be, all sittin' in a circle round a table with a cigar box on it. They'd each put four bits into the box. That was the pot.

"A stranger wouldn't 'a' made nothin' very excitin' out of that game, nor yet would 'a' caught on" to what it were. For them pore yaps jes' sat there, each with his little glass thermometer in his mouth, a-waitin' and a-waitin' and never sayin' a word. Then bime-by Bud, who's a-holdin' of the watch on 'em, sings out 'Time!' an' they all takes their thermometers out an' looks at 'em careful-like to see where they stand.

"Mine's ninety-nine," says one.

"An' another says:

"Mine's a hundred."

"An' Clarence pipes up—coughin' all the time:

"Mine's a hundred 'n one 'n 'alf."

"An', no one havin' a higher tempriture than that, Clarence captures the pot. It was a queer kind o' game.

"Well, on that particular Sunday morning they's

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some unpleasantness along o' one o' the other one-lungers layin' it out as how Clarence had done some monkey-business to make his tempriture so high. It was said as how Clarence had took and drunk some hot tea afore comin' into the game at Bud's. They all began to discuss that same p'int.

"Naturally, they don't go at it polite, and to make their remarks p'inted they says a cuss-word occasional, and Clarence, bein' a high-steppin' gent as takes nobody's dust, slings it back some forceful.

"Then all at once they hears Peg-leg beller from where's he layin' on the lounge (they ain't figured on his bein' so contiguous), and he gives it to be understood, does Peg-leg, as how the next one-lunger that indulges in whatsoever profanity will lose his voice abrupt.

"They all drops out at that, bar the chap who had the next highest tempriture to Clarence. Him having missed the pot by only a degree or so is considerable sore.

"'Why,' says he, 'I've had a reg'lar *fever* since yesterday afternoon, an' only just dodged a hem'rage by a squeak. I'm all legitimate, I am; an' if you-all's mis-doubts as how my tempriture ain't normal you kin jes' ask the doctor. I don't take it easy that a strappin', healthy gesabe whose case ain't nowheres near the hopeless p'int yet steps in here with a scalded mouth and plays it low.'

"Clarence he r'ars right up at that an' forgits about Peg-leg an' expresses doubts, not to say convictions, about the one-lunger's chances of salvation. He puts it all into about three words, an' just as quick as look at it we hears ol' Peg-leg's wooden stump a-comin'. We stampedes considerable prompt, but Clarence falls over a chair, an' before he kin get up Peg-leg has him by the windpipe.

"Now I ain't billin' myself as a all-round star hero an' general grand-stand man. But I was sure took with

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Clarence, an' I'd 'a' been real disappointed if Peg-leg 'ud a-killed him that morning—which he sure was tryin' to do when I came in for a few chips.

"I don' draw on Peg-leg, him being down on his knees over Clarence, an' his back turned, but without sensin' very much *what* I'm a-doin' of I grabs holt o' the first part o' Peg-leg that comes handy, which, so help me, Bob, is his old wooden leg. I starts to pull him off o' Clarence, but instead o' that I pulls off the wooden leg an' goes a-staggerin' back agin the wall with the thing in my fist.

"Y'know how it is now with a fightin' pup if you pull his tail while he's a-chawin' up the other pup. Ye can bat him over the head till you're tired, or kick him till you w'ars your boot out, an' he'll go right on chawin' the harder. But monkey with his tail an' he's that sensitive an' techy about it that he'll take a interest right off.

"Well, it were just so with Peg-leg—though I never knew it. Just by accident I'd laid holt of him where he was tender; an' when he felt that leg go—say, lemme tell you, he was some excited. He forgits all about Clarence, and he lines out for me, a-clawin' the air. Lucky he'd left his gun in the other room.

"Well, sir, y'ought to have seen him, a-hoppin' on one foot, and banging agin the furniture, jes' naturally black in the face with rage, an' doin' his darnedest to lay his hands on me, roarin' all the whiles like a steer with a kinked tail.

"Well, I'm skeered, and I remarks that same without shame. I'm skeered. I don't want to come to no grapples with Peg-leg in his wrath, an' I knows that so long as he can't git his leg he can't take after me very fast. Bud's saloon backs right up agin the bluff over the river. So what do I do but heave that same wooden leg through one o' the back windows, an' down she goes (as I

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thought) mebbe seventy feet into the canyon o' the Colorado? And then, mister man, I skins out—fast.

"I takes me headlong flight by way o' the back room and *on-root* pitches Peg-leg's gun over into the canyon, too, an' then whips around the corner of the saloon an' fetches out ag'in by the street in front. With his gun gone an' his leg gone, Peg-leg—so long's yain't within arm's reach—is as harmless as a horned toad. So I kinda hangs 'round the neighbourhood jes' to see what-all mout turn up.

"Peg-leg, after hoppin' back to find that his gun was gone, to look for his leg, comes out by the front door, hoppin' from one chair to another, an' seein' me standin' there across the street makes remarks; an' he informs me that because of this same little turn-up this mornin' I ain't never goin' to live to grow hair on my face. His observations are that vigorous an' p'inted that I sure begin to see it that way, too, and I says to myself:

"Now you, Bunt McBride, you've cut it out for yourself good and hard, an' the rest o' your life ain't goin' to be free from nervousness. Either y'ought to 'a' let this here hell-roarin' maverick alone or else you should 'a' put him clean out o' business when you had holt o' his shootin'-iron. An' I ain't a bit happy.' And then jes' at this stage o' the proceedings occurs what youse 'ud call a diversion.

"It seemed that that wood stump didn't go clean to the river as I first figured, but stuck three fourths the way down. An' a-course there's a fool half-breed kid who's got to chase after it, thinkin' to do Peg-leg a good turn.

"I don't know nothin' about this, but jes' stand there talkin' back to Peg-leg, an' pretendin' I ain't got no misgivings, when I sees this kid comin' a-cavoortin' an' a-cayoodlin' down the street with the leg in his hands, hollerin' out:

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"Here's your leg, Mister Peg-leg! I went an' got it for you, Mister Peg-leg!"

"It ain't so likely that Peg-leg could 'a' caught me even if he'd had his leg, but I wa'n't takin' no chances. An' as Peg-leg starts for the kid I start, too—with my heart knockin' agin my front teeth, you can bet.

"I never knew how fast a man could hop till that mornin', an', lookin' at Peg-leg with the tail o' my eye as I ran, it seemed to me as how he was a-goin' over the ground like a ole he-kangaroo. But somehow he gets off his balance and comes down all of a smash like a rickety table, an' I reaches the kid first an' takes the leg away from him.

"I guess Peg-leg must 'a' begun to lay it out by then that I held a straight flush to his ace high, for he sits down on the edge of the sidewalk an' being some winded, too, he just glares. Then byme-by he says:

"You think you are some smart now, sonny, but I'm a-studyin' of your face so's I'll know who to look for when I git a new leg; an' believe me, I'll know it, m'son—yours and your friend's, too' (he meant Clarence)—'an' I guess you'll both be kind o' sick afore I'm done with you. *You!*" he goes on, tremendous disgusting. 'You! an' them one-lungers a-swearin' an' a-cussin' an' bedamnin' an' bedevillin' one a-other. Ain't ye just ashamed o' yourselves?' (he thought I was a one-lunger, too); 'ain't ye ashamed—befoulin' your mouths, and disturbin' the peace along of a quiet Sunday mornin', an' you-all's waist over in your graves? I'm fair sick o' my job,' he remarks, goin' kind o' thoughtful. 'Ten years now I've been range-ridin' all this yere ranch, a-doin' o' my little feeble, or'nary best to clean out the mouths o' you men an' purify the atmosphere o' God's own country, but I ain't made *one* convert. I've pounded 'em an' booted 'em, an' busted 'em an' shot 'em up, an' they go on cussin' each other

out harder'n ever. I don't know w'at all to do an' I sometimes gets plumb discouraged-like.'

"Now, hearin' of him talk that-a-way an', a-knowin' of his weakness, I gits a idea. It's a chanst and mebbe it don't pan out; but I puts it up as a bluff. I don't want, you see, to spend the rest o' my appointed time in this yere vale o' tears a-dodgin' o' Peg-leg Smith, an' in the end, after all, to git between the wind and a forty-eight calibre do-good, sure not. So I puts up a deal. Says I: 'Peg-leg, I'll make a bargint along o' you. You lays it out as how you ain't never converted nobody out o' his swearin' habits. Now if you wants, 'ere's a chanst. You gimme your word as a gent and a good-man-an'-true, as how you won't never make no play to shoot me up, in nowise whatsoever, so long as we both do live, an' promise never to bust me, or otherwise, and promise never to rustle me or interfere with my life, liberty, and pursuit o' happiness, an' thereunto you set your seal an' may Lord 'a' mercy on your soul—you promise that, an' I will agree an' covenant with the party o' the first part to abstain an' abjure, early or late, dry or drinkin', in liquor or out, out o' luck or in, rangin' or roundin', from all part an' parcel o' profanity, cuss-words, little or big, several and separate, bar none; this yere agreement to be considered as bindin' an' obligatory till the day o' your demise, decease or death. *There!*' says I, 'there's a fair bargint put up between man an' man, an' I puts it to you fair. You comes in with a strong ante an' you gets a genuine, guaranteed, an' high-grade convert—the real article. You stays out, an' not only you loses a good chanst to cut off and dam up as vigorous a stream o' profanity as is found between here and Laredo, but you loses a hand-made, copper-bound, steel-riveted, artificial limb—which in five minutes o' time,' says I, windin' up, 'will sure feed the fire. There's the bargint.'

"Well, the ol' man takes out time for about as long

A BARGAIN WITH PEG-LEG

as a thirsty horse-rustler could put away half a dozen drinks an' he studies the proposition sideways and endways an' down side up. Then at last he ups and speaks out decided-like:

"Son," he says, "son, it's a bargint. Gimmee my leg."

"Somehow neither o' us misdoubts as how the other man won't keep his word; an' I gives him his stump, an' he straps her on joyful-like, just as if he'd got back a ole friend. Then later on he hikes out for Mojave and I don' see him no more for mebbe three years."

"And then?" I prompted.

"Well, I'll tell you," continued Bunt, between mouthfuls of pie, "I'll tell you. This yere prejudice agin profanity is the only thing about this yere Peg-leg that ain't pizen bad, an' *that* prejudice, you got to know, was just along o' his being loco on that one subjeck. 'Twa'n't as if he had any real principles or convictions about the thing. It was just a loco prejudice. Just as some gesabes has feelin's agin cats an' snakes, or agin seein' a speckled nigger. It was just on-reasonable. So what I'm aimin' to have you understand is the fact that it was extremely appropriate that Peg-leg should die, that it was a blame good thing, and somethin' to be celebrated by free drinks all around.

"You can say he treated me white, an' took my unsupported word. Well, so he did; but that was in spite o' what he really was hisself, 'way on the inside o' him. Inside o' him he was black-bad, an' it wa'n't a week after we had made our bargint that he did for a little Mojave kid in a way I don't like to think of.

"So when he took an' died like as how I'm a-going to tell you of, I was plumb joyful, not only because I could feel at liberty to relieve my mind when necessary in a manner as is approved of and rightful among gents—not only because o' that, but because they was one less bad egg in the cow-country.

A BARGAIN WITH PEG-LEG

"Now the manner o' Peg-leg's dying was sure hilarious-like. I didn't git over laughin' about it for a month o' Sundays—an' I ain't done yet. It was sure a joke on Peg-leg. The cutest joke that ever was played off on him.

"It was in Sonora—Sonora, Arizona, I mean. They'd a-been a kind o' gold excitement there, and all the boys had rounded up. The town was full—chock-a-block. Peg-leg he was there, too, drunk all the time an' bullyin' everybody, an' slambangin' around in his same old way. That very day he'd used a friend o' his—his best friend—cruel hard: just mean and nasty, you know.

"Well, I'm sitting into a little game o' faro about twelve o'clock at night, me an' about a dozen o' the boys. We're good an' interested, and pretty much to the good o' the game, an' somebody's passin' drinks when all at once there's a sure big rumpus out in the street, an' a gent sticks his head through the door an' yells out:

"‘Hi, there, they's a fire! The Golden West Hotel is on fire!’

"We draws the game as soon as convenient and hikes out, an', my word, you'd 'a' thought from the looks o' things as how the whole town was going. But it was only the hotel—the Golden West, where Peg-leg was stayin'; an' when we got up we could hear the ol' murderer bellerin' an' ragin', an' him drunk—of course.

"Well, I'm some excited. Lord love you, I'd as soon 'a' seen Peg-leg shot as I would eat, an' when I remembers the little Mojave kid I'm glad as how his time is at hand. Saved us the trouble o' lynchin' that sooner or later had to come.

"Peg-leg's room was in the front o' the house on the fourth floor, but the fire was all below, and what with the smoke comin' out the third-story winders he couldn't see down into the street, no more'n the boys could see him—only they just heard him bellerin'.

A BARGAIN WITH PEG-LEG

"Then some one of 'em sings out:

"Hey, Peg-leg, jump! We got a blanket here."

"An' sure enough he does jump!"

Here Bunt chuckled grimly, muttering, "Yes, sir, sure enough he did jump."

"I don't quite see," I observed, "where the laugh comes in. What was the joke of it?"

"The joke of it was," finished Bunt, "that they hadn't any blanket."

THE PASSING OF COCK-EYE BLACKLOCK

WELL, m'son," observed Bunt about half an hour after supper, "if your provender has shook down comfortable by now, we might as well jar loose and be moving along out yonder."

We left the fire and moved toward the hobbled ponies, Bunt complaining of the quality of the outfit's meals. "Down in the Panamint country," he growled, "we had a Chink that was a sure frying-pan expert; but *this Dago* —my word! That ain't victuals, that supper. That's just a' ingenious device for removing superfluous appetite. Next time I assimilate nutriment in this camp I'm sure going to take chloroform beforehand. Careful to draw your cinch tight on that pinto bronc' of yours. She always swells up same as a horned toad soon as you begin to saddle up."

We rode from the circle of the camp-fire's light and out upon the desert. It was Bunt's turn to ride the herd that night, and I had volunteered to bear him company.

Bunt was one of a fast-disappearing type. He knew his West as the cockney knows his Piccadilly. He had mined with and for Ralston, had soldiered with Crook, had turned cards in a faro game at Laredo, and had known the Apache Kid. He had fifteen separate and different times driven the herds from Texas to Dodge City, in the good old, rare old, wild old days when Dodge was the headquarters for the cattle trade, and as near to heaven as the cowboy cared to get. He had seen the

end of gold and the end of the buffalo, the beginning of cattle, the beginning of wheat, and the spreading of the barbed-wire fence, that, in the end, will take from him his occupation and his revolver, his chaparejos and his usefulness, his lariat and his reason for being. He had seen the rise of a new period the successive stages of which, singularly enough, tally exactly with the progress of our own world-civilization: first the nomad and hunter, then the herder, next and last the husbandman. He had passed the mid-mark of his life. His moustache was grey. He had four friends—his horse, his pistol, a teamster in the Indian Territory Panhandle named Skinny, and me.

The herd—I suppose all told there were some two thousand head—we found not far from the water-hole. We relieved the other watch and took up our night's vigil. It was about nine o'clock. The night was fine, calm. There was no cloud. Toward the middle watches one could expect a moon. But the stars, the stars! In Idaho, on those lonely reaches of desert and range, where the shadow of the sun by day and the courses of the constellations by night are the only things that move, these stars are a different matter from those bleared pin-points of the city after dark, seen through dust and smoke and the glare of electrics and the hot haze of fire-signs. On such a night as that when I rode the herd with Bunt *anything* might have happened; one could have believed in fairies then, and in the buffalo-ghost, and in all the weirds of the craziest Apache "Messiah" that ever made medicine.

One remembered astronomy and the "measureless distances" and the showy problems, including the rapid moving of a ray of light and the long years of its travel between star and star, and smiled incredulously. Why, the stars were just above our heads, were not much higher than the flat-topped hills that barred the hori-

zons. Venus was a yellow lamp hung in a tree; Mars a red lantern in a clock-tower.

One listened instinctively for the tramp of the constellations. Orion, Cassiopeia, and Ursa Major marched to and fro on the vault like cohorts of legionaires, seemingly within call of our voices, and all without a sound.

But beneath these quiet heavens the earth disengaged multitudinous sounds—small sounds, minimized as it were by the muffling of the night. Now it was the yap of a coyote leagues away; now the snapping of a twig in the sage-brush; now the mysterious, indefinable stir of the heat-ridden land cooling under the night. But more often it was the confused murmur of the herd itself—the click of a horn, the friction of heavy bodies, the stamp of a hoof, with now and then the low, complaining note of a cow with a calf, or the subdued noise of a steer as it lay down, first lurching to the knees, then rolling clumsily upon the haunch, with a long, stertorous breath of satisfaction.

Slowly at Indian trot we encircled the herd. Earlier in the evening a prairie-wolf had pulled down a calf, and the beasts were still restless.

Little eddies of nervousness at long intervals developed here and there in the mass—eddies that not impossibly might widen at any time with perilous quickness to the maelstrom of a stampede. So as he rode Bunt sang to these great brutes, literally to put them to sleep—sang an old grandmother's song, with all the quaint modulations of sixty, seventy, a hundred years ago:

“With her ogling winks
And bobbling blinks,
Her quizzing glass,
Her one eye idle,
Oh, she loved a bold dragoon,
With his broadsword, saddle, bridle.
Whack, fol-de-rol!”

I remember that song. My grandmother—so they tell me—used to sing it in Carolina, in the thirties, accompanying herself on a harp, if you please:

“Oh, she loved a bold dragoon,
With his broadsword, saddle, bridle.”

It was in Charleston, I remembered, and the slave-ships used to discharge there in those days. My grandmother had sung it then to her beaux; officers they were; no wonder she chose it—“Oh, she loved a bold dragoon”—and now I heard it sung on an Idaho cattle-range to quiet two thousand restless steers.

Our talk at first, after the cattle had quieted down, ran upon all manner of subjects. It is astonishing to note what strange things men will talk about at night and in a solitude. That night we covered religion, of course, astronomy, love affairs, horses, travel, history, poker, photography, basket-making, and the Darwinian theory. But at last inevitably we came back to cattle and the pleasures and dangers of riding the herd.

“I rode herd once in Nevada,” remarked Bunt, “and I was caught into a blizzard, and I was sure freezing to death. Got to where I couldn’t keep my eyes open, I was that sleepy. Tell you what I did. Had some eating-tobacco along, and I’d chew it a spell, then rub the juice into my eyes. Kept it up all night. Blame near blinded me, but I come through. Me and another man named Blacklock—Cock-eye Blacklock we called him, by reason of his having one eye that was some out of line. Cock-eye sure ought to have got it that night, for he went bad afterward, and did a heap of killing before he did get it. He was a bad man for sure, and the way he died is a story in itself.”

There was a long pause. The ponies jogged on. Rounding on the herd, we turned southward.

“He did ‘get it’ finally, you say,” I prompted.

PASSING OF COCK-EYE BLACKLOCK

"He certainly did," said Bunt, "and the story of it is what a man with a' imaginary mind like you ought to make into one of your friction tales."

"Is it about a treasure?" I asked with apprehension. For ever since I once made a tale (of friction) out of one of Bunt's stories of real life, he has been ambitious for me to write another, and is forever suggesting motifs which invariably—I say invariably—imply the discovery of great treasures. With him, fictitious literature must always turn upon the discovery of hidden wealth.

"No," said he, "it ain't about no treasure, but just about the origin, hist'ry, and development—and subsequent decease—of as mean a Greaser as ever stole stock, which his name was Cock-eye Blacklock.

"You see, this same Blacklock went bad about two summers after our meet-up with the blizzard. He worked down Yuma way and over into New Mexico, where he picks up with a sure-thing gambler, and the two begin to devastate the population. They do say when he and his running mate got good and through with that part of the Land of the Brave, men used to go round trading guns for commissary, and clothes for ponies, and cigars for whisky and such. There just wasn't any money left anywhere. Those sharps had drawed the landscape clean. Someone found a dollar in a floor-crack in a saloon, and the barkeep' gave him a gallon of forty-rod for it, and used to keep in it a box for exhibition, and the crowd would get around it and paw it over and say: 'My! my! Whatever in the world is this extremely cu-roos coin?'

"Then Blacklock cuts loose from his running mate, and plays a lone hand through Arizona and Nevada, up as far as Reno again, and there he stacks up against a kid—a little tenderfoot kid so new he ain't cracked the green paint off him—and skins him. And the kid, being foolish and impulsive-like, pulls out a pea-shooter. It was a *twenty-two*," said Bunt, solemnly. "Yes, the kid

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was just that pore, pathetic kind to carry a dinky twenty-two, and with the tears runnin' down his cheeks begins to talk tall. Now what does that Cock-eye do? Why, that pore kid that he had skinned couldn't 'a' hurt him with his pore little bric-à-brac. Does Cock-eye take his little parlour ornament away from him, and spank him, and tell him to go home? No, he never. The kid's little tin pop-shooter explodes right in his hand before he can crook his forefinger twice, and while he's a-wondering what-all has happened Cock-eye gets his two guns on him, slow and deliberate like, mind you, and throws forty-eights into him till he ain't worth shooting at no more. Murders him like the mud-eating horse-thieving snake of a Greaser that he is; but being within the law, the kid drawing on him first, he don't stretch hemp the way he should.

"Well, fin'ly this Blacklock blows into a mining-camp in Placer County, California, where I'm chuck-tending on the night-shift. This here camp is maybe four miles across the divide from Iowa Hill, and it sure is named a cu-roos name, which it is Why-not. They is a barn contiguous, where the mine horses are kep', and, blame me! if there ain't a weathercock on top of that same—a golden trotting-horse—*upside down*. When the stranger an' pilgrim comes in, says he first off: 'Why'n snakes they got that weathercock horse upside down—why?' says he. 'Why-not,' says you, and the drinks is on the pilgrim.

"That all went very lovely till some gesabe opens up a placer drift on the far side the divide, starts a rival camp, an' names her Because. The Boss gets mad at that, and rights up the weathercock, and renames the camp Ophir, and you don't work no more pilgrims.

"Well, as I was saying, Cock-eye drifts into Why-not and begins diffusing trouble. He skins some of the boys in the hotel over in town, and a big row comes of it, and

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one of the bed-rock cleaners cuts loose with both guns. Nobody hurt but a quarter-breed, who loses a' eye. But the marshal don't stand for no short-card men, an' closes Cock-eye up some prompt. Him being forced to give the boys back their money is busted an' can't get away from camp. To raise some wind he begins depre-dating.

"He robs a pore half-breed of a cayuse, and shoots up a Chink who's panning tailings, and generally and variously becomes too pronounced, till he's run outen camp. He's sure stony-broke, not being able to turn a card because of the marshal. So he goes to live in a' ole cabin up by the mine ditch, and sits there doing a heap o' thinking, and hatching trouble like a' ole he-hen.

"Well, now, with that deporting of Cock-eye comes his turn of bad luck, and it sure winds his clock up with a loud report. I've narrated special of the scope and range of this 'ere Blacklock, so as you'll understand why it was expedient and desirable that he should up an' die. You see, he always managed, with all his killings and Robbins and general and sundry flimflamming, to be just within the law. And if anybody took a notion to shoot him up, why, his luck saw him through, and the other man's shooting-iron missed fire, or exploded, or threw wild, or such like, till it seemed as if he sure did bear a charmed life; and so he did till a pore yeller tamale of a fool dog did for him what the law of the land couldn't do. Yes, sir, a fool dog, a pup, a blame yeller pup named Sloppy Weather, did for Cock-eye Blacklock, sporting character, three-card-monte man, sure-thing sharp, killer, and general bedeviller.

"You see, it was this way. Over in American Cañon some five miles maybe back of the mine, there was a creek called the American River, and it was sure chock-a-block full of trouts. The Boss used for to go

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over there with a dinky fish-pole like a buggy-whip about once a week, and scout that stream for fish and bring back a basketful. He was sure keen on it, and had bought some kind of privilege or other, so as he could keep other people off.

"Well, I used to go along with him to pack the truck, and one Saturday, about a month after Cock-eye had been run outer camp, we hiked up over the divide, and went for to round up a bunch o' trouts. When we got to the river there was a mess for your life. Say, that river was full of dead trouts, floating atop the water; and they were some even on the bank. Not a scratch on 'em; just dead. The Boss had the papsy-lals. I never *did* see a man so rip-r'aring, snorting mad. *I* hadn't a guess about what we were up against, but he knew, and he showed down. He said somebody had been shooting the river for fish to sell down Sacramento way to the market. A mean trick; kill more fish in one shoot than you can possibly pack.

"Well, we didn't do much fishing that day—couldn't get a bite, for that matter—and took off home about noon to talk it over. You see, the Boss, in buying the privileges or such for that creek, had made himself responsible to the Fish Commissioners of the State, and 'twasn't a week before they were after him, camping on his trail incessant, and wanting to know how about it. The Boss was some worried, because the fish were being killed right along, and the Commission was making him weary of living. Twicet afterward we prospected along that river and found the same lot of dead fish. We even put a guard there, but it didn't do no manner of good.

"It's the Boss who first suspicions Cock-eye. But it don't take no seventh daughter of no seventh daughter to trace trouble where Blacklock's about. He sudden shows up in town with a bunch of simoleons, buying

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bacon and tin cows* and such provender, and generally giving it away that he's come into money. The Boss, who's watching his movements sharp, says to me one day:

"‘Bunt, the storm-centre of this here low area is a man with a cock-eye, an' I'll back that play with a paint horse against a paper dime.’

"‘No takers,’ says I. ‘Dirty work and a cock-eyed man are two heels of the same mule.’

"‘Which it’s a-kicking of me in the stummick frequent and painful,’ he remarks, plenty wrathful.

"‘On general principles,’ I said, ‘it’s a royal flush to a pair of deuces as how this Blacklock bird ought to stop a heap of lead, and I know the man to throw it. He’s the only brother of my sister, and tends chuck in a placer mine. How about if I take a day off and drop round to his cabin and interview him on the fleetin’ and unstable nature of human life?’

"But the Boss wouldn’t hear of that.

"‘No,’ says he; ‘that’s not the bluff to back in this game. You an’ me an’ Mary-go-round’—that was what we called the marshal, him being so much all over the country—‘you an’ me an’ Mary-go-round will have to stock a sure-thing deck against that maverick.’

"So the three of us gets together an’ has a talky-talk, an’ we lays it out as how Cock-eye must be watched and caught red-handed.

"Well, let me tell you, keeping case on that Greaser sure did lack a certain indefinable charm. We tried him at sun-up, an’ again at sundown, an’ nights, too, laying in the chaparral an’ tarweed, an’ scouting up an’ down that blame river, till we were sore. We built surreptitious a lot of shooting-boxes up in trees on the far side of the canyon, overlooking certain an’ sundry pools in the river where Cock-eye would be likely to pursue operations,

*Condensed milk.

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an' we took turns watching. I'll be a Chink if that bad egg didn't put it on us same as previous, an' we'd find new-killed fish all the time. I tell you we were *fitchered*; and it got on the Boss's nerves. The Commission began to talk of withdrawing the privilege, an' it was up to him to make good or pass the deal. We knew Blacklock was shooting the river, y' see, but we didn't have no evidence. Y' see, being shut off from card-sharping, he was up against it, and so took to pot-hunting to get along. It was as plain as red paint.

"Well, things went along sort of catch-as-catch-can like this for maybe three weeks, the Greaser shooting fish regular, an' the Boss b'ilng with rage, and laying plans to call his hand, and getting bluffed out every deal.

"And right here I got to interrupt, to talk some about the pup dog, Sloppy Weather. If he hadn't got caught up into this Blacklock game, no one'd ever thought enough about him to so much as kick him. But after it was all over, we began to remember this same Sloppy an' to recall what he was; no big job. He was just a worthless fool pup, yeller at that, everybody's dog, that just hung round camp, grinning and giggling and playing the goat, as half-grown dogs will. He used to go along with the car-boys when they went swimmin' in the resevoy, an' dash along in an' yell an' splash round just to show off. He thought it was a keen stunt to get some gesabe to throw a stick in the resevoy so's he could paddle out after it. They'd trained him always to bring it back an' fetch it to whichever party throwed it. He'd give it up when he'd retrieved it, an' yell to have it throwed again. That was his idea of fun—just like a fool pup.

"Well, one day this Sloppy Weather is off chasing jack-rabbits an' don't come home. Nobody thinks anything about that, nor even notices it. But we afterward finds out that he'd met up with Blacklock that day, an'

stopped to visit with him—sorry day for Cock-eye. Now it was the very next day after this that Mary-go-round an' the Boss plans another scout. I'm to go, too. It was a Wednesday, an' we lay it out that the Cock-eye would prob'ly shoot that day so's to get his fish down to the railroad Thursday, so they'd reach Sacramento Friday—fish day, see. It wasn't much to go by, but it was the high card in our hand, an' we allowed to draw to it.

"We left Why-not afore daybreak, an' worked over into the canyon about sun-up. They was one big pool we hadn't covered for some time, an' we made out we'd watch that. So we worked down to it, an' clumb up into our trees, an' set out to keep guard.

"In about an hour we heard a shoot some mile or so up the creek. They's no mistaking dynamite, leastways not to miners, an' we knew that shoot was dynamite an' nothing else. The Cock-eye was at work, an' we shook hands all round. Then pretty soon a fish or so began to go by—big fellows, some of 'em, dead an' floatin', with their eyes popped 'way out same as knobs—sure sign they'd been shot.

"The Boss took and grit his teeth when he see a three-pounder go by, an' made remarks about Blacklock.

"'Sh!' says Mary-go-round, sudden-like. 'Listen!'

"We turned ear down the wind, an' sure there was the sound of someone scrabbling along the boulders by the riverside. Then we heard a pup yap.

"'That's our man,' whispers the Boss.

"For a long time we thought Cock-eye had quit for the day an' had coppered us again, but byne-by we heard the manzanita crack on the far side the canyon, an' there at last we see Blacklock working down toward the pool, Sloppy Weather following an' yapping and cayoodling just as a fool dog will.

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"Blacklock comes down to the edge of the water quiet-like. He lays his big scoop-net an' his sack—we can see it half full already—down behind a boulder, and takes a good squinting look all round, and listens maybe twenty minutes, he's that cute, same's a coyote stealing sheep. We lies low an' says nothing, fear he might see the leaves move.

"Then byne-by he takes his stick of dynamite out his hip pocket—he was just that reckless kind to carry it that way—an' ties it careful to a couple of stones he finds handy. Then he lights the fuse an' heaves her into the drink, an' just there's where Cock-eye makes the mistake of his life. He ain't tied the rocks tight enough, an' the loop slips off just as he swings back his arm, the stones drop straight down by his feet, and the stick of dynamite whirls out right enough into the pool.

"Then the funny business begins.

"Blacklock ain't made no note of Sloppy Weather, who's been sizing up the whole game an' watchin' for the stick. Soon as Cock-eye heaves the dynamite into the water, off goes the pup after it, just as he'd been taught to do by the car-boys.

"Hey, you fool dog!" yells Blacklock.

"A lot that pup cares. He heads out for that stick of dynamite same as if for a veal cutlet, reaches it, grabs hold of it, an' starts back for shore, with the fuse sputterin' like hot grease. Blacklock heaves rocks at him like one possessed, capering an' dancing; but the pup comes right on. The Cock-eye can't stand it no longer, but lines out. But the pup's got to shore an' takes after him. Sure; why not? He thinks it's all part of the game. Takes after Cock-eye, running to beat a' express, while we-all whoops and yells an' nearly falls out the trees for laffing. Hi! Cock-eye did scratch gravel for sure. But 'tain't no manner of use. He can't run through that rough ground like Sloppy Weather, an' that fool pup

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comes a-cavortin' along, jumpin' up against him, an' him a-kickin' him away, an' rarin', an' dancin', an' shakin' his fists, an' the more he rars the more fun the pup thinks it is. But all at once something big happens, an' the whole bank of the canyon opens out like a big wave, and slops over into the pool, an' the air is full of trees an' rocks and cart-loads of dirt an' dogs and Blacklocks and rivers an' smoke an' fire generally. The Boss got a clod o' river-mud spang in the eye, an' went off his limb like's he was trying to bust a bucking bronc' an' couldn't; and ol' Mary-go-round was shooting off his gun on general principles, glarin' round wild-eyed an' like as if he saw a' Injun devil.

"When the smoke had cleared away an' the trees and rocks quit falling, we climb down from our places an' started in to look for Blacklock. We found a good deal of him, but they wasn't hide nor hair left of Sloppy Weather. We didn't have to dig no grave, either. They was a big enough hole in the ground to bury a horse an' wagon, let alone Cock-eye. So we planted him there, an' put up a board, an' wrote on it:

Here lies most
of
C. BLACKLOCK,
who died of a'
entangling alliance with
a
stick of dynamite.

Moral: A hook and line is good enough
fish-tackle for any honest man.

"That there board lasted for two years, till the freshet of '82, when the American River——Hello, there's the sun!"

All in a minute the night seemed to have closed up like a great book. The east flamed roseate. The air was cold, nimble. Some of the sage-brush bore a thin rim of

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frost. The herd, aroused, the dew glistening on flank and horn, were chewing the first cud of the day, and in twos and threes moving toward the water-hole for the morning's drink. Far off toward the camp the breakfast fire sent a shaft of blue smoke straight into the moveless air. A jack-rabbit, with erect ears, limped from the sage-brush just out of pistol-shot and regarded us a moment, his nose wrinkling and trembling. By the time that Bunt and I, putting our ponies to a canter, had pulled up by the camp of the Bar-circle-Z outfit, another day had begun in Idaho.

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THE manuscript of the account that follows belongs to a harness-maker in Albuquerque, Juan Tejada by name, and he is welcome to whatever of advertisement this notice may bring him. He is a good fellow, and his patented martingale for stage horses may be recommended. I understand he got the manuscript from a man named Bass, or possibly Bass left it with him for safe-keeping. I know that Tejada has some things of Bass's now—things that Bass left with him last November: a mess-kit, a lantern, and a broken theodolite—a whole saddle-box full of contraptions. I forgot to ask Tejada how Bass got the manuscript, and I wish I had done so now, for the finding of it might be a story itself. The probabilities are that Bass simply picked it up page by page off the desert, blown about the spot where the fight occurred and at some little distance from the bodies. Bass, I am told, is a bone-gatherer by profession, and one can easily understand how he would come across the scene of the encounter in one of his tours into western Arizona. My interest in the affair is impersonal, but none the less keen. Though I did not know young Karslake, I knew his stuff—as everybody still does, when you come to that. For the matter of that, the mere mention of his pen-name, "Anson Qualtraugh," recalls at once to thousands of the readers of a certain world-famous monthly magazine of New York articles and stories he wrote for it while he was alive; as, for instance, his admirable descriptive work called "Traces of the Aztecs on the Mogolon Mesa," in the October number

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of 1890. Also, in the January issue of 1892 there are two specimens of his work, one signed Anson Qualtraugh and the other Justin Blisset. Why he should have used the Blisset signature I do not know. It occurs only this once in all his writings. In this case it is signed to a very indifferent New Year's story. The Qualtraugh "stuff" of the same number is, so the editor writes to me, a much shortened transcript of a monograph on "Primitive Methods of Moki Irrigation," which are now in the archives of the Smithsonian. The admirable novel, *The Peculiar Treasure of Kings*, is of course well known. Karslake wrote it in 1888-89, and the controversy that arose about the incident of the third chapter is still—sporadically and intermittently—continued.

The manuscript that follows now appears, of course, for the first time in print, and I acknowledge herewith my obligations to Karslake's father, Mr. Patterson Karskale, for permission to publish.

I have set the account down word for word, with all the hiatuses and breaks that by nature of the extraordinary circumstances under which it was written were bound to appear in it. I have allowed it to end precisely as Karslake was forced to end it, in the middle of a sentence. God knows the real end is plain enough and was not far off when the poor fellow began the last phrase that never was to be finished.

The value of the thing is self-apparent. Besides the narrative of incidents it is a simple setting forth of a young man's emotions in the very face of violent death. You will remember the distinguished victim of the guillotine, a lady who on the scaffold begged that she might be permitted to write out the great thoughts that began to throng her mind. She was not allowed to do so, and the record is lost. Here is a case where the record is preserved. But Karslake, being a young man not very much given to introspection, his work is more a picture

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of things seen than a transcription of things thought. However, one may read between the lines; the very breaks are eloquent, while the break at the end speaks with a significance that no words could attain.

The manuscript in itself is interesting. It is written partly in pencil, partly in ink (no doubt from a fountain pen), on sheets of manila paper torn from some sort of long and narrow account-book. In two or three places there are smudges where the powder-blackened finger and thumb held the sheets momentarily. I would give much to own it, but Tejada will not give it up without Bass's permission, and Bass has gone to the Klondike.

As to Karslake himself. He was born in Raleigh, in North Carolina, in 1868, studied law at the State University, and went to the Bahamas in 1885 with the members of a government coast survey commission. Gave up the practice of law and "went in" for fiction and the study of the ethnology of North America about 1887. He was unmarried.

The reasons for his enlisting have long been misunderstood. It was known that at the time of his death he was a member of B Troop of the Sixth Regiment of United States Cavalry, and it was assumed that because of this fact Karslake was in financial difficulties and not upon good terms with his family. All this, of course, is untrue, and I have every reason to believe that Karslake at this time was planning a novel of military life in the Southwest, and, wishing to get in closer touch with the *milieu* of the story, actually enlisted in order to be able to write authoritatively. He saw no active service until the time when his narrative begins. The year of his death is uncertain. It was in the spring probably of 1896, in the twenty-eighth year of his age.

There is no doubt he would have become in time a great writer. A young man of twenty-eight who had so

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lively a sense of the value of accurate observation, and so eager a desire to produce that in the very face of death he could faithfully set down a description of his surroundings, actually laying down the rifle to pick up the pen, certainly was possessed of extraordinary faculties.

"They came in sight early this morning just after we had had breakfast and had broken camp. The four of us—'Bunt,' 'Idaho,' Estorijo, and myself—were jogging on to the southward and had just come up out of the dry bed of some water-hole—the alkali was white as snow in the crevices—when Idaho pointed them out to us, three to the rear, two on one side, one on the other, and—very far away—two ahead. Five minutes before, the desert was as empty as the flat of my hand. They seemed literally to have *grown* out of the sage-brush. We took them in through my field-glasses and Bunt made sure they were an outlying band of Hunt-in-the-Morning's bucks. I had thought, and so had all of us, that the rest of the boys had rounded up the whole of the old man's hostiles long since. We are at a loss to account for these fellows here. They seem to be well mounted.

"We held a council of war from the saddle without halting, but there seemed very little to be done—but to go right along and wait for developments. At about eleven we found water—just a pocket in the bed of a dried stream—and stopped to water the ponies. I am writing this during the halt.

"We have one hundred and sixteen rifle cartridges. Yesterday was Friday, and all day, as the newspapers say, 'The situation remained unchanged.' We expected surely that the night would see some rather radical change, but nothing happened, though we stood watch and watch till morning. Of yesterday's eight only six are in sight and we bring up reserves. We now have

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two to the front, one on each side, and two to the rear, all far out of rifle-range.

[*The following paragraph is in an unsteady script and would appear to have been written in the saddle. The same peculiarity occurs from time to time in the narrative, and occasionally the writing is so broken as to be illegible.*]

"On again after breakfast. It is about eight-fifteen. The other two have come back—without 'reserves,' thank God. Very possibly they did not go away at all, but were hidden by a dip in the ground. I cannot see that any of them are nearer. I have watched one to the left of us steadily for more than half an hour and I am sure that he has not shortened the distance between himself and us. What their plans are Hell only knows, but this silent, persistent escorting tells on the nerves. I do not think I am afraid—as yet. It does not seem possible but that we will ride into La Paz at the end of the fortnight exactly as we had planned, meet Greenock according to arrangements, and take the stage on to the railroad. Then next month I shall be in San Antonio and report at headquarters. Of course, all this is to be, of course; and this business of to-day will make a good story to tell. It's an experience—good 'material.' Very naturally I cannot now see how I am going to get out of this" [*the word "alive" has here been erased*], "but of course I will. Why 'of course'? I don't know. Maybe I am trying to deceive myself. Frankly, it looks like a situation insoluble; but the solution will surely come right enough in good time.

"Eleven o'clock.—No change.

"Two-thirty P. M.—We are halted to tighten girths and to take a single swallow of the canteens. One of them rode in a wide circle from the rear to the flank, about ten minutes ago, conferred a moment with his fellow, then fell back to his old position. He wears some sort of red cloth or blanket. We reach no more water till day

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after to-morrow. But we have sufficient. Estorijo has been telling funny stories en route.

“Four o’clock P. M.—They have closed up perceptibly, and we have been debating about trying one of them with Idaho’s Winchester. No use; better save the ammunition. It looks . . .” [the next words are undecipherable, but from the context they would appear to be “as if they would attack to-night”] “. . . we have come to know certain of them now by nicknames. We speak of the Red One, or the Little One, or the One with the Feather, and Idaho has named a short thickset fellow on our right ‘Little Willie.’ By God, I wish something would turn up—relief or fight. I don’t care which. How Estorijo can cackle on, reeling off his senseless, pointless, funny stories, is beyond me. Bunt is almost as bad. They understand the fix we are in, I know, but how they can take it so easily is the staggering surprise. I feel that I am as courageous as either of them, but levity seems horribly inappropriate. I could kill Estorijo joyfully.

“Sunday morning.—Still no developments. We were so sure of something turning up last night that none of us pretended to sleep. But nothing stirred. There is no sneaking out of the circle at night. The moon is full. A jack-rabbit could not have slipped by them unseen last night.

“Nine o’clock (in the saddle).—We had coffee and bacon as usual at sunrise; then on again to the southeast just as before. For half an hour after starting the Red One and two others were well within rifle-shot, nearer than ever before. They had worked in from the flank. But before Idaho could get a chance at them they dipped into a shallow arroyo, and when they came out on the other side were too far away to think of shooting.

“Ten o’clock.—All at once we find there are nine instead of eight; where and when this last one joined the

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band we cannot tell. He wears a sombrero and army trousers, but the upper part of his body is bare. Idaho calls him 'Half-and-half.' He is riding a— They're coming.

"Later.—For a moment we thought it was the long-expected rush. The Red One—he had been in the front—wheeled quick as a flash and came straight for us, and the other followed suit. Great Heavens, how they rode! We could hear them yelling on every side of us. We jumped off our ponies and stood behind them, the rifles across the saddles. But at four hundred yards they all pivoted about and cantered off again leisurely. Now they followed us as before—three in the front, two in the rear, and two on either side. I do not think I am going to be frightened when the rush does come. I watched myself just now. I was excited, and I remember Bunt saying to me, 'Keep your shirt on, m'son'; but I was not afraid of being killed. Thank God for that! It is something I've long wished to find out, and now that I know it I am proud of it. Neither side fired a shot. I was not afraid. It's glorious. Estorijo is all right.

"Sunday afternoon, one-thirty.—No change. It is unspeakably hot.

"Three-fifteen.—The One with the Feather is walking, leading his pony. It seems to be lame." [With this entry Karslake ended page five, and the next page of the manuscript is numbered seven. It is very probable, however, that he made a mistake in the numerical sequence of his pages, for the narrative is continuous, and, at this point at least, unbroken. There does not seem to be any sixth page.]

"Four o'clock.—Is it possible that we are to pass another night of suspense? They certainly show no signs of bringing on the crisis, and they surely would not attempt anything so late in the afternoon as this. It is a

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relief to feel that we have nothing to fear till morning, but the tension of watching all night long is fearful.

"Later.—Idaho has just killed the Little One.

"Later.—Still firing.

"Later.—Still at it.

"Later, about five.—A bullet struck within three feet of me.

"Five-ten.—Still firing.

"Seven-thirty P. M., in camp.—It happened so quickly that it was all over before I realized. We had our first interchange of shots with them late this afternoon. The Little One was riding from the front to the flank. Evidently he did not think he was in range—nor did any of us. All at once Idaho tossed up his rifle and let go without aiming—or so it seemed to me. The stock was not at his shoulder before the report came. About six seconds after the smoke had cleared away we could see the Little One begin to lean backward in the saddle, and Idaho said grimly, 'I guess I got *you*.' The Little One leaned farther and farther till suddenly his head dropped back between his shoulder-blades. He held to his pony's mane with both hands for a long time and then all at once went off feet first. His legs bent under him like putty as his feet touched the ground. The pony bolted.

"Just as soon as Idaho fired the others closed right up and began riding around us at top speed, firing as they went. Their aim was bad as a rule, but one bullet came very close to me. At about half-past five they drew off out of range again and we made camp right where we stood. Estorijo and I are both sure that Idaho hit the Red One, but Idaho himself is doubtful, and Bunt did not see the shot. I could swear that the Red One all but went off his pony. However, he seems active enough now.

"Monday morning.—Still another night without at-

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tack. I have not slept since Friday evening. The strain is terrific. At daybreak this morning, when one of our ponies snorted suddenly, I cried out at the top of my voice. I could no more have repressed it than I could have stopped my blood flowing; and for half an hour afterward I could feel my flesh crisping and pringling, and there was a sickening weakness at the pit of my stomach. At breakfast I had to force down my coffee. They are still in place, but now there are two on each side, two in the front, two in the rear. The killing of the Little One seems to have heartened us all wonderfully. I am sure we will get out—somehow. But oh! the suspense of it.

“Monday morning, nine-thirty.—Under way for over two hours. There is no new development. But Idaho has just said that they seem to be edging in. We hope to reach water to-day. Our supply is low, and the ponies are beginning to hang their heads. It promises to be a blazing hot day. There is alkali all to the west of us, and we just commence to see the rise of ground miles to the southward that Idaho says is the San Jacinto Mountains. Plenty of water there. The desert hereabout is vast and lonesome beyond words; leagues of sparse sage-brush, leagues of leper-white alkali, leagues of baking grey sand, empty, heat-ridden, the abomination of desolation; and always—in whichever direction I turn my eyes—always, in the midst of this pale-yellow blur, a single figure in the distance, blanketed, watchful, solitary, standing out sharp and distinct against the background of sage and sand.

“Monday, about eleven o’clock.—No change. The heat is appalling. There is just a——

“Later.—I was on the point of saying that there was just a mouthful of water left for each of us in our canteens when Estorijo and Idaho both at the same time cried out that they were moving in. It is true. They are

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within rifle range, but do not fire. We, as well, have decided to reserve our fire until something more positive happens.

"Noon.—The first shot—for to-day—from the Red One. We are halted. The shot struck low and to the left. We could see the sand spout up in a cloud just as though a bubble had burst on the surface of the ground.

"They have separated from each other, and the whole eight of them are now in a circle around us. Idaho believes the Red One fired as a signal. Estorijo is getting ready to take a shot at the One with the Feather. We have the ponies in a circle around us. It looks as if now at last this was the beginning of the real business.

Later, twelve-thirty-five.—Estorijo missed. Idaho will try with the Winchester as soon as the One with the Feather halts. He is galloping toward the Red One.

"All at once, about two o'clock, the fighting began. This is the first let-up. It is now—God knows what time. They closed up suddenly and began galloping about us in a circle, firing all the time. They rode like madmen. I would not have believed that Indian ponies could run so quickly. What with their yelling and the incessant crack of their rifles and the thud of their ponies' feet our horses at first became very restless, and at last Idaho's mustang bolted clean away. We all stood to it as hard as we could. For about the first fifteen minutes it was hot work. The Spotted One is hit. We are certain of that much, though we do not know whose gun did the work. My poor old horse is bleeding dreadfully from the mouth. He has two bullets in the stomach, and I do not believe he can stand much longer. They have let up for the last few moments, but are still riding around us, their guns at 'ready.' Every now and then one of us fires, but the heat shimmer has come up over the ground since noon and the range is extraordinarily deceiving.

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"Three-ten.—Estorijo's horse is down, shot clean through the head. Mine has gone long since. We have made a rampart of the bodies.

"Three-twenty.—They are at it again, tearing around us incredibly fast, every now and then narrowing the circle. The bullets are striking everywhere now. I have no rifle, do what I can with my revolver, and try to watch what is going on in front of me and warn the others when they press in too close on my side." [Karslake nowhere accounts for the absence of his carbine. That a U. S. trooper should be without his gun while traversing a hostile country is a fact difficult to account for.]

"Three-thirty.—They have winged me—through the shoulder. Not bad, but it is bothersome. I sit up to fire, and Bunt gives me his knee on which to rest my right arm. When it hangs it is painful.

"Quarter to four.—It is horrible. Bunt is dying. He cannot speak, the ball having gone through the lower part of his face, but back, near the neck. It happened through his trying to catch his horse. The animal was struck in the breast and tried to bolt. He reared up, backing away, and as we had to keep him close to us to serve as a bulwark Bunt followed him out from the little circle that we formed, his gun in one hand, his other gripping the bridle. I suppose every one of the eight fired at him simultaneously, and down he went. The pony dragged him a little ways still clutching the bridle, then fell itself, its whole weight rolling on Bunt's chest. We have managed to get him in and secure his rifle, but he will not live. None of us knows him very well. He only joined us about a week ago, but we all liked him from the start. He never spoke of himself, so we cannot tell much about him. Idaho says he has a wife in Torreon, but that he has not lived with her for two years; they did not get along well together, it seems. This is the first violent death I have ever seen, and it

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astonishes me to note how *unimportant* it seems. How little anybody cares—after all. If I had been told of his death—the details of it, in a story or in the form of fiction—it is easily conceivable that it would have impressed me more with its importance than the actual scene has done. Possibly my mental vision is scaled to a larger field since Friday, and as the greater issues loom up one man more or less seems to be but a unit—more or less—in an eternal series. When he was hit he swung back against the horse, still holding by the rein. His feet slid from under him, and he cried out, ‘My God!’ just once. We divided his cartridges between us and Idaho passed me his carbine. The barrel was scorching hot.

“They have drawn off a little and for fifteen minutes, though they still circle us slowly, there has been no firing. Forty cartridges left. Bunt’s body (I think he is dead now) lies just back of me, and already the gnats—I can’t speak of it.”

[*Karslake evidently made the next few entries at successive intervals of time, but neglected in his excitement to note the exact hour as above. We may gather that “They” made another attack and then repeated the assault so quickly that he had no chance to record it properly. I transcribe the entries in exactly the disjointed manner in which they occur in the original. The reference to the “fire” is unexplainable.*]

“I shall do my best to set down exactly what happened and what I do and think, and what I see.

“The heat-shimmer spoiled my aim, but I am quite sure that either

“This last rush was the nearest. I had started to say that though the heat-shimmer was bad, either Estorijo or myself wounded one of their ponies. We saw him stumble.

“Another rush——

“Our ammunition

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"Only a few cartridges left.

"The Red One like a whirlwind only fifty yards away

"We fire separately now as they sneak up under cover of our smoke.

"We put the fire out. Estorijo——" [It is possible that Karslake had begun here to chronicle the death of the Mexican.]

"I have killed the Spotted One. Just as he wheeled his horse I saw him in a line with the rifle-sights and let him have it squarely. It took him straight in the breast. I could feel that shot strike. He went down like a sack of lead weights. By God, it was superb!

"Later.—They have drawn off out of range again, and we are allowed a breathing-spell. Our ponies are either dead or dying, and we have dragged them around us to form a barricade. We lie on the ground behind the bodies and fire over them. There are twenty-seven cartridges left.

"It is now mid-afternoon. Our plan is to stand them off if we can till night and then to try an escape between them. But to what purpose? They would trail us so soon as it was light.

"We think now that they followed us without attacking for so long because they were waiting till the lay of the land suited them. They wanted—no doubt—an absolutely flat piece of country, with no depressions, no hills, or streambeds in which we could hide, but which should be high upon the edges, like an amphitheatre. They would get us in the centre and occupy the rim themselves. Roughly, this is the bit of desert which witnesses our 'last stand.' On three sides the ground swells a very little—the rise is not four feet. On the third side it is open, and so flat that even lying on the ground as we do we can see (leagues away) the San Jacinto hills—'from whence cometh no help.' It is all sand and sage, forever and forever. Even the sage is sparse—a bad place

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even for a coyote. The whole is flagellated with an intolerable heat and—now that the shooting is relaxed—oppressed with a numbing, sodden silence—the silence of a primordial world. Such a silence as must have brooded over the Face of the Waters on the Eve of Creation—desolate, desolate, as though a colossal, invisible pillar—a pillar of the Infinitely Still, the pillar of Nirvana—rose forever into the empty blue, human life an atom of microscopic dust crushed under its basis, and at the summit God Himself. And I find time to ask myself why, at this of all moments of my tiny life-span, I am able to write as I do, registering impressions, keeping a finger upon the pulse of the spirit. But oh! if I had time now—time to write down the great thoughts that do throng the brain. They are there. I feel them, know them. No doubt the supreme exaltation of approaching death is the stimulus that one never experiences in the humdrum business of the day-to-day existence. Such mighty thoughts! Unintelligible, but if I had time I could spell them out, *and how I could write then!* I feel that the whole secret of Life is within my reach; I can almost grasp it; I seem to feel that in just another instant I can see it all plainly, as the archangels see it all the time, as the great minds of the world, the great philosophers, have seen it once or twice, vaguely—a glimpse here and there, after years of patient study. Seeing thus I should be the equal of the gods. But it is not meant to be. There is a sacrilege in it. I almost seem to understand why it is kept from us. But the very reason of this withholding is in itself a part of the secret. If I could only, only set it down!—for whose eyes? Those of a wandering hawk? God knows. But never mind. I should have spoken—once; should have said the great Word for which the World since the evening and the morning of the First Day has listened. God knows. God knows. What a whirl is this? Monstrous

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incongruity. Philosophy and fighting troopers. The Infinite and dead horses. There's humour for you. The Sublime takes off its hat to the Ridiculous. Send a cartridge clashing into the breech and speculate about the Absolute. Keep one eye on your sights and the other on Cosmos. Blow the reek of burned powder from before you so you may look over the edge of the abyss of the Great Primal Cause. Duck to the whistle of a bullet and commune with Schopenhauer. Perhaps I am a little mad. Perhaps I am supremely intelligent. But in either case I am not understandable to myself. How, then, be understandable to others? If these sheets of paper, this incoherence, is ever read, the others will understand it about as much as the investigating hawk. But none the less be it of record that I, Karslake, saw. It reads like Revelation: 'I, John, saw.' It is just that. There is something apocalyptic in it all. I have seen a vision, but cannot—there is the pitch of anguish in the impotence—bear record. If time were allowed to order and arrange the words of description, this exaltation of spirit, in that very space of time, would relax, and the describer lapse back to the level of the average again before he could set down the things he saw, the things he thought. The machinery of the mind that could coin the great Word is automatic, and the very force that brings the die near the blank metal supplies the motor power of the reaction before the impression is made . . . I stopped for an instant, looking up from the page, and at once the great vague panorama faded. I lost it all. Cosmos has dwindled again to an amphitheatre of sage and sand, a vista of distant purple hills, the shimmer of scorching alkali, and in the middle distance there, those figures, blanketed, beaded, feathered, rifle in hand.

"But for a moment I stood on Patmos.

"The Ridiculous jostles the elbow of the Sublime and shoulders it from place as Idaho announces that

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he has found two more cartridges in Estorijo's pockets.

"They rushed again. Eight more cartridges gone. Twenty-one left. They rush in this manner—at first the circle, rapid beyond expression, one figure succeeding the other so swiftly that the dizzied vision loses count and instead of seven of them there appear to be seventy. Then suddenly, on some indistinguishable signal, they contract this circle, and through the jets of powder-smoke Idaho and I see them whirling past our rifle-sights not one hundred yards away. Then their fire suddenly slackens, the smoke drifts by, and we see them in the distance again, moving about us at a slow canter. Then the blessed breathing-spell, while we peer out to know if we have killed or not, and count our cartridges. We have laid the twenty-one loaded shells that remain in a row between us, and after our first glance outward to see if any of them are down, our next is inward at that ever-shrinking line of brass and lead. We do not talk much. This is the end. We know it now. All of a sudden the conviction that I am to die here has hardened within me. It is, all at once, absurd that I should ever have supposed that I was to reach La Paz, take the east-bound train, and report at San Antonio. It seems to me that I *knew*, weeks ago, that our trip was to end thus. I knew it—somehow—in Sonora, while we were waiting orders, and I tell myself that if I had only stopped to really think of it I could have foreseen to-day's bloody business.

"Later.—The Red One got off his horse and bound up the creature's leg. One of us hit him, evidently. A little higher, it would have reached the heart. Our aim is ridiculously bad—the heat-shimmer—

"Later.—Idaho is wounded. This last time, for a moment, I was sure the end had come. They were within revolver range and we could feel the vibration of the ground under their ponies' hoofs. But suddenly they

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drew off. I have looked at my watch; it is four o'clock.

"Four o'clock.—Idaho's wound is bad—a long, raking furrow in the right forearm. I bind it up for him, but he is losing a great deal of blood and is very weak.

"They seem to know that we are only two by now, for with each rush they grow bolder. The slackening of our fire must tell them how scant is our ammunition.

"Later.—This last was magnificent. The Red One and one other with lines of blue paint across his cheek galloped right at us. Idaho had been lying with his head and shoulders propped against the neck of his dead pony. His eyes were shut, and I thought he had fainted. But as he heard them coming he struggled up, first to his knees and then to his feet—to his full height—dragging his revolver from his hip with his left hand. The whole right arm swung useless. He was so weak that he could only lift the revolver halfway—could not get the muzzle up. But though it sagged and dropped in his grip, he *would* die fighting. When he fired, the bullet threw up the sand not a yard from his feet, and then he fell on his face across the body of the horse. During the charge I fired as fast as I could, but evidently to no purpose. They must have thought that Idaho was dead, for as soon as they saw him getting to his feet they cheered their horses off and went by on either side of us. I have made Idaho comfortable. He is unconscious; have used the last of the water to give him a drink. He does not seem—

"They continue to circle us. Their fire is incessant, but very wild. So long as I keep my head down I am comparatively safe.

"Later.—I think Idaho is dying. It seems he was hit a second time when he stood up to fire. Estorijo is still breathing; I thought him dead long since.

"Four-ten.—Idaho gone. Twelve cartridges left. Am all alone now.

A MEMORANDUM OF SUDDEN DEATH

"Four-twenty-five.—I am very weak." [Karslake was evidently wounded sometime between ten and twenty-five minutes after four. His notes make no mention of the fact.] "Eight cartridges remain. I leave my library to my brother, Walter Patterson Karslake; all my personal effects to my parents, except the picture of myself taken in Baltimore in 1897, which I direct to be" [the next lines are undecipherable] "... at Washington, D. C., as soon as possible. I appoint as my literary

"Four forty-five.—Seven cartridges. Very weak and unable to move lower part of my body. Am in no pain. They rode in very close. The Red One is— An intolerable thirst—

"I appoint as my literary executor my brother, Patterson Karskale. The notes on 'Coronado in New Mexico' should be revised.

"My death occurred in western Arizona, April 15th, at the hands of a roving band of Hunt-in-the-Morning's bucks. They have—

"Five o'clock.—The last cartridge gone.

"Estorijo still breathing. I cover his face with my hat. Their fire is incessant. Am much weaker. Convey news of death to Patterson Karslake, care of Corn Exchange Bank, New York City.

"Five-fifteen—about.—They have ceased firing, and draw together in a bunch. I have four cartridges left" [see conflicting note dated five o'clock], "but am extremely weak. Idaho was the best friend I had in all the Southwest. I wish it to be known that he was a generous, open-hearted fellow, a kindly man, clean of speech, and absolutely unselfish. He may be known as follows: Sandy beard, long sandy hair, scar on forehead, about six feet one inch in height. His real name is James Monroe Herndon; his profession that of government scout. Notify Mrs. Herndon, Trinidad, New Mexico.

"The writer is Arthur Staples Karslake, dark hair,

A MEMORANDUM OF SUDDEN DEATH

height five feet eleven, body will be found near that of Herndon.

“Luis Estorijo, Mexican—

“Later.—Two more cartridges.

“Five-thirty.—Estorijo dead.

“It is half-past five in the afternoon of April 15th. They followed us from the eleventh—Friday—till today. It will

[*The MS. ends here.*]

TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE

WHICH I puts it up as how you ain't never heard about that time that Hardenberg and Strokher—the Englisher—had a friendly go with bare knuckles—ten rounds it was—all along o' a feemale woman?"

It is a small world and I had just found out that my friend, Bunt McBride—horse-wrangler, miner, faro-dealer, and bone-gatherer—whose world was the plains and ranges of the Great Southwest, was known of the Three Black Crows, Hardenberg, Strokher, and Ally Bazan, and had even foregathered with them on more than one of their ventures for Cyrus Ryder's Exploitation Agency—ventures that had nothing of the desert in them, but that involved the sea, and the schooner, and the taste of the great-lunged canorous trades.

"Ye ain't never crossed the trail o' that mournful history?"

I professed my ignorance and said:

"They fought?"

"Mister Man," returned Bunt soberly, as one broaching a subject not to be trifled with. "They sure did. Friendly-like, y'know—like as how two high-steppin', sassy gents figures out to settle any little strained relations—friendly-like but considerable keen."

He took a pinch of tobacco from his pouch and a bit of paper and rolled a cigarette in the twinkling of an eye, using only one hand, in true Mexican style.

"Now," he said, as he drew the first long puff to the very bottom of the leathern valves he calls his lungs. "Now, I'm a-goin' for to relate that same painful proceedin' to you, just so as you kin get a line on the con-

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sumin' and devourin' foolishness o' male humans when they's a woman in the wind. Woman," said Bunt, wagging his head thoughtfully at the water, "woman is a weather-breeder. Mister Dixon, they is three things I'm skeered of. The last two I don't just rightly call to mind at this moment, but the first is woman. When I meets up with a feemale woman on my trail, I sheers off some prompt, Mr. Dixon; I sheers off. An' Hardenberg," he added irrelevantly, "would a-took an' married this woman, so he would. Yes, an' Strokher would, too."

"Was there another man?" I asked.

"No," said Bunt. Then he began to chuckle behind his moustaches. "Yes, they was." He smote a thigh. "They sure was another man for fair. Well, now, Mr. Man, lemme tell you the whole '*how*'."

"It began with me bein' took into a wild-eyed scheme that that maverick, Cy Ryder, had cooked up for the Three Crows. They was a row down Gortamalar way. Some gesabe named Palachi—Barreto Palachi—findin' times dull an' the boys some off their feed, ups an' says to hisself, 'Exercise is wot I needs. I will now take an' overthrow the blame Gover'ment.' Well, this same Palachi rounds up a bunch o' *insurrectos* an' begins pesterin' an' badgerin' an' hectorin' the Gover'ment; an' rarin' round an' bellerin' an' makin' a procession of himself, till he sure pervades the landscape; an' before you knows what, lo'n beholt, here's a reel live Revolution-Thing cayoodlin' in the scenery, an' the Gover'ment is plum bothered.

"They rounds up the gesabe at last at a place on the coast, but he escapes as easy as how-do-you-do. He can't, howsoever, git back to his *insurrectos*; the blame Gover'ment being in possession of all the trails leadin' into the hinterland; so says he, 'What for a game would it be for me to hyke up to 'Frisco an' git in touch with my financial backers an' consiprator to smuggle down a

TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE

load o' arms?' Which the same he does, and there's where the Three Black Crows an' me begin to take a hand.

"Cy Ryder gives us the job o' taking the schooner down to a certain point on the Gortamalar coast and there delivering to the agent o' the gazabo three thousand stand o' forty-eight Winchesters.

"When we gits this far into the game Ryder ups and says:

"Boys, here's where I cashes right in. You sets right to me for the schooner and the cargo. But you goes to Palachi's agent over 'crost the bay for instructions and directions.'

"But,' says the Englisher, Strokher, 'thisbettin' a blind play don't suit our hand. Why not,' says he, 'make right up to Mister Palachi hisself?'

"No,' says Ryder. 'No, boys. Ye can't. The Señor is lying as low as a toad in a wheel-track these days, because o' the pryin' and meddlin' disposition o' the local authorities. No,' he says, 'ye must have your palaver with the agent which she is a woman,' an' thereon I groans low and despairin'.

"So soon as he mentions 'feemale' I *knowed* trouble was in the atmosphere. An' right there is where I sure looses my presence o' mind. What I should 'a' done was to say, 'Mister Ryder, Hardenberg and gents all: You're good boys an' you drinks and deals fair, an' I loves you all with a love that can never, never die for the terms o' your natural lives, an' may God have mercy on your souls; *but* I ain't keepin' case on this 'ere game no longer. Woman and me is mules an' music. We ain't never made to ride in the same go-cart. Good-bye.' That-all is wot I should ha' said. But I didn't. I walked right plum into the sloo, like the mudhead that I was, an' got mired for fair—jes' as I might 'a' knowed I would.

"Well, Ryder gives us a address over across the bay an' we fair hykes over there all along o' as crool a rain as ever killed crops. We finds the place after a while, a lodgin'-house all lorn and loony, set down all by itself in the middle o' some real estate extension like a tepee in a 'barren'—a crazy 'modern' house all gimcrack and woodwork and frostin', with never another place in so far as you could hear a coyote yelp.

"Well, we bucks right up an' asks o' the party at the door if the Señorita Esperanza Ulivarri—that was who Ryder had told us to ask for—might be concealed about the premises, an' we shows Cy Ryder's note. The party that opened the door was a Greaser, the worst looking I ever clapped eyes on—looked like the kind wot 'ud steal the coppers off his dead grandmother's eyes. Anyhow, he says to come in, gruff-like, an' to wait, *poco tiempo*.

"Well, we waited *mucho tiempo—muy mucho*, all a-settin' on the edge of the sof'y, with our hats on our knees, like philly-loo birds on a rail, and a-countin' of the patterns in the wall-paper to pass the time along. An' Hardenberg, who's got to do the talkin', gets the fidgets byne-by; and because he's only restin' the toes o' his feet on the floor, his knees begin jiggerin'; an' along o' watchin' him, *my* knees begin to go, an' then Strokher's and then Ally Bazan's. An' there we sat all in a row and jiggered an' jiggered. Great snakes, it makes me sick to the stummick to think o' the idjeets we were.

"Then after a long time we hears a rustle o' silk petticoats, an' we all grabs holt o' one another an' looks scared-like, out from under our eyebrows. An' then—then, Mister Man, they walks into that bunk-house parlour the loveliest-lookin' young feemale woman that ever wore hair.

"She was lovelier than Mary Anderson; she was love-

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lier than Lotta. She was tall, an' black-haired, and had a' eye . . . well, I dunno; when she gave you the littlest flicker o' that same eye, you felt it was about time to take an' lie right down an' say, 'I would esteem it, ma'am, a sure smart favour if you was to take an' wipe your boots on my waistcoat, jus' so's you could hear my heart a-beatin'. That's the kind o' feemale woman *she* was.

"Well, when Hardenberg had caught his second wind, we begins to talk business.

"'An' you're to take a passenger back with you,' says Esperanza after a while.

"'What for a passenger might it be?' says Hardenberg.

"She fished out her calling-card at that and tore it in two an' gave Hardenberg one half.

"'It's the party,' she says, 'that'll come aboard off San Diego on your way down an' who will show up the other half o' the card—the half I have here an' which the same I'm goin' to mail to him. An' you be sure the halves fit before you let him come aboard. An' when that party comes aboard,' she says, 'he's to take over charge.'

"'Very good,' says Hardenberg, mincing an' silly like a chessy cat lappin' cream. 'Very good, ma'am; your orders shall be obeyed.' He sure said it just like that, as if he spoke out o' a story-bock. An' I kicked him under the table for it.

"Then we palavers a whole lot an' settles the way the thing is to be run, an' fin'ly, when we'd got as far as could be that day, the Señorita stood up an' says:

"'Now me good fellows.' 'Twas Spanish she spoke. 'Now, me good fellows, you must drink a drink with me.' She herds us all up into the dining room and fetches out—not whisky, mind you—but a great, fat, green-and-gold bottle o' champagne, an' when Ally Bazan has fired it off, she fills our glasses—dinky little flat glasses

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that looked like flower vases. Then she stands up there before us, fine an' tall, all in black silk, an' puts her glass up high an' sings out:

“‘To the Revolution!’

“An’ we all solemn-like says, ‘To the Revolution,’ an’ crooks our elbows. When we all comes to, about half an hour later, we’re in the street outside, havin’ jus’ said good-bye to the Señorita. We all are some quiet the first block or so, and then Hardenberg says—stoppin’ dead in his tracks:

“I pauses to remark that when a certain young female party havin’ black hair an’ a killin’ eye gets good an’ ready to travel up the centre aisle of a church, I know the gent to show her the way, which he is six feet one in his stocking-feet, some freckled across the nose, an’ shoots with both hands.”

“Which the same observations,’ speaks up Strokher, twirlin’ his yeller lady-killer, ‘which the same observations,’ he says, ‘has my hearty indorsement an’ coöperation savin’ in the particular of the description o’ the gent. The gent is five foot eleven high, three feet thick, is the only son of my mother, an’ has yeller moustaches and a buck tooth.’

“‘He don’t qualify,’ puts in Hardenberg. ‘First, because he’s a Englisher, and second, because he’s up agin a’ American—and besides, he has a tooth that’s bucked.’

“‘Buck or no buck,’ flares out Strokher, ‘wot might be the meanin’ o’ that remark concernin’ being a Englisher?’

“‘The fact o’ his bein’ English,’ says Hardenberg, ‘is only half the hoe-handle. Tother half being the fact that the first-named gent is all American. No Yank ain’t never took no dust from aft a Englisher, whether it were war, walkin'-matches, or women.’

“‘But they’s a Englisher,’ sings out Strokher, ‘not

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forty miles from here as can pick the nose o' a freckled Yank if so be occasion require.'

"Now ain't that plum foolish-like," observed Bunt, philosophically. "Ain't it plum foolish-like o' them two gesabes to go flyin' up in the air like two he-hens on a hot plate—for nothin' in the world but because a neat-lookin' feemale woman has looked at 'em some soft?"

"Well, naturally, we others—Ally Bazan an' me—we others throws it into 'em pretty strong about bein' more kinds of blame fools than a pup with a bug; an' they simmers down some, but along o' the way home I kin see as how they're a-glarin' at each other, an' a-drawin' theirselves up proud-like an' presumptoos, an' I groans again not loud but deep, as the Good Book says.

"We has two or three more palavers with the Señorita Esperanza and stacks the deck to beat the harbour police and the Customs people an' all, an' to nip down the coast with our contraband. An' each time we chins with the Señorita there's them two locoes steppin' and sidle'n' around her, actin' that silly-like that me and Ally Bazan takes an' beats our heads agin' the walls so soon as we're alone just because we're that pizen mortified.

"Fin'ly comes the last talky-talk an' we're to sail away next day an' mebbe snatch the little Joker through or be took an' hung by the *Costa Guardas*.

"An' 'Good-bye,' says Hardenberg to Esperanza, in a faintin', die-away voice like a kitten with a cold. 'An' ain't we goin' to meet no more?'

"I sure hopes as much," puts in Strokher, smirkin' so's you'd think he was a he-milliner sellin' a bonnet. 'I hope,' says he, 'our delightful acquaintanceship ain't a-goin' for to end abrupt this-a-way.'

"Oh, you nice, big Mister Men," pipes up the Señorita in English, 'we will meet down there in Gortamalar

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soon again, yes, because I go down by the vapour carriages to-morrow.'

"'Unprotected, too,' says Hardenberg, waggin' his fool head. 'An' so young!'

"Holy Geronimo! I don't know what more fool drivelin' they had, but they fin'ly comes away. Ally Bazan and me rounds 'em up and conducts 'em to the boat an' puts 'em to bed like as if they was little—or drunk, an' the next day—or next night, rather—about one o'clock, we slips the heel ropes and hobbles o' the schooner quiet as a mountain-lion stalking a buck, and catches the out-tide through the gate o' the bay. Lord, we was some keyed up, lemmee tell you, an' Ally Bazan and Hardenberg was at the fore end o' the boat with their guns ready in case o' bein' asked impert'nent questions by the patrol-boats.

"Well, how-some-ever, we nips out with the little Jokers (they was writ in the manifest as minin' pumps) an' starts south. This 'ere *pasear* down to Gortamalar is the first time I goes a-gallying about on what the Three Crows calls 'blue water'; and when that schooner hit the bar I begins to remember that my stummick and inside arrangements ain't made o' no chilled steel, nor yet o' rawhide. First I gits plum sad, and shivery, and I feels as mean an' pore as a prairie-dog w'ich 'as eat a horned toad back'ards. I goes to Ally Bazan and gives it out as how I'm going for to die, an' I puts it up that I'm sure sad and depressed-like; an' don't care much about life nohow; an' that present surroundin's lack that certain undescribable charm. I tells him that I *knows* the ship is goin' to sink afore we git over the bar. Waves!—they was higher'n the masts; and I've rode some fair lively sun-fishers in my time, but I ain't never struck anythin' like the rarin' and buckin' and high-an'-lofty tumblin' that that same boat went through with those first few hours after we had come out.

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"But Ally Bazan tells me to go downstairs in the boat an' lie up quiet, an' byne-by I do feel better. By next day I kin sit up and take solid food again. An' then's when I takes special notice o' the everlastin' foolishness o' Strokher and Hardenberg.

"You'd 'a' thought each one o' them two mush-heads was tryin' to act the part of a' ole cow which has had her calf took. They goes a-moonin' about the boat that mournful it 'ud make you yell jus' out o' sheer nervousness. First one 'ud up an' hold his head on his hand an' lean on the fence-rail that ran around the boat, and sigh till he'd raise his pants clean outa the top o' his boots. An' then the other 'ud go off in another part o' the boat an' he'd sigh an' moon an' take on fit to sicken a coyote.

"But byne-by—we're mebbe six days to the good o' 'Frisco—byne-by they two gits kind o' sassy along o' each other, an' they has a heart-to-heart talk and puts it up as how either one o' 'em 'ud stand to win so only t'other was out o' the game.

"It's double or nothing," says Hardenberg, who is somethin' o' a card sharp, "for either you or me, Stroke; an' if you're agreeable I'll play you a round o' jacks for the chance at the Señorita—the loser to pull out o' the running for good an' all."

"No, Strokher don't come in on no such game, he says. He wins her, he says, as a man, and not as no poker player. No, nor he won't throw no dice for the chance o' winnin' Esperanza, nor he won't flip no coin, nor yet 'rastle. 'But,' says he all of a sudden, 'I'll tell you which I'll do. You're a big, thick, strappin' hulk o' a two-fisted dray-horse, Hardie, an' I ain't no effete an' digenerate one-lunger myself. Here's wot I propose—that we all takes an' lays out a sixteen-foot ring on the quarter-deck, an' that the raw-boned Yank and the stodgy Englisher strips to the waist, an' all-friendly-like,

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settles the question by Queensbury rules an' may the best man win.'

"Hardenberg looks him over.

"An' wot might be your weight?" says he. 'I don't figure on hurtin' of you, if so be you're below my class.'

"I fights at a hunder and seventy," says Strokher.

"An' me," says Hardenberg, 'at a hunder an' seventy-five. We're matched.'

"Is it a go?" inquires Strokher.

"You bet your great-gran'mammy's tortis-shell chessy cat it's a go," says Hardenberg, prompt as a hop-frog catching flies.

"We don't lose no time trying to reason with 'em, for they is sure keen on havin' the go. So we lays out a ring by the rear end o' the deck, an' runs the schooner in till we're in the lee o' the land, an' she ridin' steady on her pins.

"Then along o' about four o'clock on a fine still day we lays the boat to, as they say, an' folds up the sail, an' havin' scattered resin in the ring (which it ain't no ring, but a square o' ropes on posts), we says all is ready.

"Ally Bazan, he's referee, an' me, I'm the time-keeper which I has to ring the ship's bell every three minutes to let 'em know to quit an' that the round is over.

"We gets 'em into the ring, each in his own corner, squattin' on a bucket, the time-keeper bein' second to Hardenberg an' the referee being second to Strokher. An' then, after they has shuk hands, I climbs up on the chicken-coop an' hollers 'Time' an' they begins.

"Mister Man, I've saw Tim Henan at his best, an' I've saw Sayres when he was a top-notcher, an' likewise several other irregler boxin' sharps that were sure tough tarriers. Also I've saw two short-horn bulls arguin' about a question o' leadership, but so help me

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Bob—the fight I saw that day made the others look like a young ladies' quadrille. Oh, I ain't goin' to tell o' that mill in detail, nor by rounds. Rounds! After the first five minutes they *wa'n't* no rounds. I rung the blame bell till I rung her loose an' Ally Bazan yells 'break-a-way' an' 'time's up' till he's black in the face, but you could no more separate them two than you could put the brakes on a blame earthquake.

"At about suppertime we pulled 'em apart. We could do it by then, they was both so gone; an' jammed each one o' 'em down in their corners. I rings my bell good an' plenty, an' Ally Bazan stands up on a bucket in the middle o' the ring an' says:

"I declare this 'ere glove contest a draw."

"An' draw it sure was. They fit for two hours stiddy an' never a one got no better o' the other. They give each other lick for lick as fast an' as steady as they could stand to it. 'Rastlin', borin' in, boxin'—all was alike. The one was just as good as t'other. An' both willin' to the very last.

"When Ally Bazan calls it a draw, they gits up and wobbles toward each other an' shakes hands, and Hardenberg he says:

"Stroke, I thanks you a whole lot for as neat a go as ever I mixed in."

"An' Strokher answers up:

"Hardie, I loves you better'n ever. You'se the first man I've met up with which I couldn't do for—an' I've met up with some scraggy propositions in my time, too."

"Well, they two is a sorry-lookin' pair o' birds by the time we runs into San Diego harbour next night. They was fine-lookin' objects for fair, all bruises and bumps. You remember now we was to take on a party at San Diego who was to show t'other half o' Esperanza's card, an' thereafterward to boss the job.

"Well, we waits till nightfall an' then slides in an' lays to off a certain pile o' stone, an' shows two green lights and one white every three and a half minutes for half a hour—this being a signal.

"They is a moon, an' we kin see pretty well. After we'd signalled about a hour, mebbe, we gits the answer—a one-minute green flare, and thereafterward we makes out a rowboat putting out and comin' toward us. They is two people in the boat. One is the gesabe at the oars an' the other a party sitting in the hinder end.

"Ally Bazan an' me, an' Strokher an' Hardenberg, we's all leanin' over the fence a-watchin'; when all to once I ups an' groans some sad. The party in the hinder end o' the boat bein' feemale.

"‘Ain’t we never goin’ to git shut of ‘em?’ says I; but the words ain’t no more’n off my teeth when Strokher pipes up:

“‘It’s *she*,’ says he, gaspin’ as though shot hard.

“‘Wot!’ cries Hardenberg, sort of mystified. ‘Oh, I’m sure a-dreamin’!’ he says, just that silly-like.

“‘An’ the mugs we’ve got!’ says Strokher. An’ they both sets to swearin’ and cussin’ to beat all I ever heard.

“‘I can’t let her see me so bunged up,’ says Hardenberg, doleful-like. ‘Oh, whatever is to be done?’

“‘An’ *I* look like a real genuine blown-in-the-bottle pug,’ whimpers Strokher. ‘Never mind,’ says he, ‘we must face the music. We’ll tell her these are sure honourable scars, got because we fit for her.’

"Well, the boat comes up an' the feemale party jumps out and comes up the let-down stairway, onto the deck. Without sayin' a word she hands Hardenberg the half o' the card and he fishes out his half an' matches the two by the light o' a lantern.

"By this time the rowboat has gone a little ways off, an' then at last Hardenberg says:

"Welkum aboard, Señorita."

"And Strokher cuts in with:

"We thought it was to be a man that 'ud join us here to take command, but *you*,' he says—an' oh, butter wouldn't 'a' melted in his mouth—'But *you*,' he says, 'is always our mistress.'

"Very right, *bueno*. Me good fellows,' says the Señorita, 'but don't you be afraid that they's no man is at the head o' this business.' An' with that the party chuck off hat an' skirts, and *I'll be Mexican if it wa'n't a man after all!*

"I'm the Señor Barreto Palachi, gentlemen,' says he. 'The gringo police who wanted for to arrest me made the disguise necessary. Gentlemen, I regret to have been obliged to deceive such gallant *compadres*; but war knows no law.'

"Hardenberg and Strokher gives one look at the Señor and another at their own spiled faces, then:

"Come back here with the boat!" roars Hardenberg over the side, and with that—(upon me word you'd a-thought they two both were moved with the same spring)—over they goes into the water and strikes out hands over hands for the boat as hard as ever they kin lay to it. The boat meets 'em—Lord knows what the party at the oars thought—they climbs in, an' the last I sees of 'em they was puttin' for shore—each havin' taken a' oar from the boatman, an' they sure was makin' that boat *hum*.

"Well, we sails away eventually without 'em; an' a year or more afterward I crosses their trail again in Cy Ryder's office in 'Frisco."

"Did you ask them about it at all?" said I.

"Mister Man," observed Bunt. "I'm several kinds of a fool; I know it. But sometimes I'm wise. I wishes for to live as long as I can, an' die when I can't help it. I does *not*, neither there, nor thereafterward, ever make

no joke, nor yet no alloosion about, or concerning the Señorita Esperanza Palachi in the hearin' o' Hardenberg an' Strokher. I've seen—(ye remember)—both those boys use their fists—an' likewise Hardenberg, as he says hisself, shoots with both hands."

THE DUAL PERSONALITY OF SLICK DICK NICKERSON

I

ON A certain morning in the spring of the year, the three men who were known as the Three Black Crows called at the office of "The President of the Pacific and Oriental Flotation Company," situated in an obscure street near San Francisco's water-front. They were Strokher, the tall, blond, solemn, silent Englishman; Hardenberg, the American, dry of humour, shrewd, resourceful, who bargained like a Vermonter and sailed a schooner like a Gloucester cod-fisher; and in their company, as ever inseparable from the other two, came the little colonial, nicknamed, for occult reasons, "Ally Bazan," a small, wiry man, excitable, vociferous, who was without fear, without guile, and without money.

When Hardenberg, who was always spokesman for the Three Crows, had sent in their names, they were admitted at once to the inner office of the "President." The President was an old man, bearded like a prophet, with a watery blue eye and a forehead wrinkled like an orang's. He spoke to the Three Crows in the manner of one speaking to friends he has not seen in some time.

"Well, Mr. Ryder," began Hardenberg. "We called around to see if you had anything fer us this morning. I don't mind telling you that we're at liberty jus' now. Anything doing?"

Ryder fingered his beard distressfully. "Very little, Joe; very little."

"Got any wrecks?"

"Not a wreck."

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Hardenberg turned to a great map that hung on the wall by Ryder's desk. It was marked in places by red crosses, against which were written certain numbers and letters. Hardenberg put his finger on a small island south of the Marquesas group and demanded: "What might be H. 33, Mr. President?"

"Pearl Island," answered the President. "Davidson is on that job."

"Or H. 125?" Hardenberg indicated a point in the Gilbert group.

"Guano deposits. That's promised."

"Hallo! You're up in the Aleutians. I make out. 20 A.—what's that?"

"Old government telegraph wire—line abandoned—finest drawn-copper wire. I've had three boys at that for months."

"What's 301? This here, off the Mexican coast?"

The President, unable to remember, turned to his one clerk: "Hyers, what's 301? Isn't that Peterson?"

The clerk ran his finger down a column. "No, sir; 301 is the Whisky Ship."

"Ah! So it is. I remember. *You* remember, too, Joe. Little schooner, the *Tropic Bird*—sixty days out from Callao—five hundred cases of whisky aboard—sunk in squall. It was thirty years ago. Think of five hundred cases of thirty-year-old whisky! There's money in that if I can lay my hands on the schooner. Suppose you try that, you boys—on a twenty per cent. basis. Come, now, what do you say?"

"Not for *fifty* per cent.," declared Hardenberg. "How'd we raise her? How'd we know how deep she lies? Not for Joe. What's the matter with landing arms down here in Central America for Bocas and his gang?"

"I'm out o' that, Joe. Too much competition."

"What's doing here in Tahiti—No. 88? It ain't lettered."

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Once more the President consulted his books. "Ah!—
88. Here we are. Cache o' illicit pearls. I had it looked up.
Nothing in it."

"Say, Cap'n!"—Hardenberg's eye had travelled to
the upper edge of the map—"whatever did you strike
up here in Alaska? At Point Barrow, s'elp me Bob!
It's 48 B."

The President stirred uneasily in his place. "Well, I
ain't quite worked that scheme out, Joe. But I smelled
the deal. There's a Russian post along there some'eres.
Where they catch sea-otters. And the skins o' sea-otters
are selling this very day for seventy dollars at any port
in China."

"I s'y," piped up Ally Bazan, "I knows a bit about
that gyme. They's a bally kind o' Lum-tums among
them Chinese as sports those syme skins on their bally
clothes—as a mark o' rank, d'ye see."

"Have you figured at all on the proposition, Cap'n?"
inquired Hardenberg.

"There's risk in it, Joe; big risk," declared the Presi-
dent nervously. "But I'd only ask fifteen per cent."

"You *have* worked out the scheme, then."

"Well—ah—y'see, there's the risk, and—ah—" Suddenly Ryder leaned forward, his watery blue eyes glinting: "Boys, it's a *jewel*. It's just your kind. I'd 'a' sent for you, to try on this very scheme, if you hadn't shown up. You kin have the *Bertha Millner*—I've a year's charter o' her from Wilbur—and I'll only ask you fifteen per cent. of the *net* profits—*net*, mind you."

"I ain't buyin' no dead horse, Cap'n," returned Hardenberg, "but I'll say this: we pay no fifteen per cent."

"Banks and the Ruggles were daft to try it and give
me twenty-five."

"An' where would Banks land the scheme? I know
him. You put him on that German cipher-code down

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Honolulu way, an' it cost you about a thousand before you could pull out. We'll give you seven an' a half."

"Ten," declared Ryder, "ten, Joe, at the very least. Why, how much do you suppose just the stores would cost me? And Point Barrow—why, Joe, that's right up in the Arctic. I got to run the risk o' you getting the *Bertha* smashed in the ice."

"What do *we* risk?" retorted Hardenberg; and it was the monosyllabic Strokher who gave the answer:

"Chokee, by Jove!"

"Ten is fair. It's ten or nothing," answered Hardenberg.

"Gross, then, Joe. Ten on the gross—or I give the job to the Ruggles and Banks."

"Who's your bloomin' agent?" put in Ally Bazan.

"Nickerson. I sent him with Peterson on that *Mary Archer* wreck scheme. An' you know what Peterson says of him—didn't give him no trouble at all. One o' my best men, boys."

"There have been," observed Strokher stolidly, "certain stories told about Nickerson. Not that *I* wish to seem suspicious, but I put it to you as man to man."

"Ay," exclaimed Ally Bazan. "He was fair nutty once, they tell me. Threw some kind o' bally fit an' come out all skew-jee'd in his mind. Forgot his nyme an' all. I s'y, how abaout him, anyw'y?"

"Boys," said Ryder, "I'll tell you. Nickerson—yes, I know the yarns about him. It was this way—y'see, I ain't keeping anything from you, boys. Two years ago he was a Methody preacher in Santa Clara. Well, he was what they call a revivalist, and he was holding forth one blazin' hot day out in the sun when all to once he goes down, flat, an' don't come round for the better part o' two days. When he wakes up he's *another person*; he'd forgot his name, forgot his job, forgot the whole

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blamed shooting-match. *And he ain't never remembered them since.* The doctors have names for that kind o' thing. It seems it does happen now and again. Well, he turned to an' began sailoring first off—soon as the hospitals and medicos were done with him—an' him not having any friends as you might say, he was let go his own gait. He got to be third mate of some kind o' dough-dish down Mexico way, and then I got hold o' him an' took him into the Comp'ny. He's been with me ever since. He ain't got the faintest kind o' recollection o' his Methody days, an' believes he's always been a sailorman. Well, that's *his* business, ain't it? If he takes my orders an' walks chalk, what do I care about his Methody game? There, boys, is the origin, history, and development of Slick Dick Nickerson. If you take up this sea-otter deal and go to Point Barrow, naturally Nick has got to go as owner's agent and representative of the Comp'ny. But I couldn't send a easier fellow to get along with. Honest, now, I couldn't. Boys, you think over the proposition between now and to-morrow an' then come around and let me know."

And the upshot of the whole matter was that one month later the *Bertha Millner*, with Nickerson, Hardenberg, Strokher, and Ally Bazan on board, cleared from San Francisco, bound—the papers were beautifully precise—for Seattle and Tacoma with a cargo of general merchandise.

As a matter of fact, the bulk of her cargo consisted of some odd hundreds of very fine lumps of rock—which as ballast is cheap by the ton—and some odd dozen cases of conspicuously labelled champagne.

The Pacific and Oriental Flotation Company made this champagne out of Rhine wine, effervescent salts, raisins, rock candy, and alcohol. It was from the same stock of wine of which Ryder had sold some thousand cases to the Coreans the year before.

"Not that I care a curse," said Strokher, the Englishman. "But I put it to you squarely that this voyage lacks that certain indescribable charm."

The *Bertha Millner* was a fortnight out, and the four adventurers—or, rather, the three adventurers and Nickerson—were lame in every joint, red-eyed from lack of sleep, half-starved, wholly wet, and unequivocally disgusted. They had had heavy weather from the day they bade farewell to the whistling buoy off San Francisco Bay until the moment when even patient, docile, taciturn Strokher had at last—in his own fashion—rebelled.

"Ain't I a dam' fool? Ain't I a proper lot? Gard strike me if I don't chuck fer fair after this. Wot'd I come to sea fer—an' this 'ere go is the worst I *ever* knew—a baoat no bigger'n a bally bath-tub, head seas, livin' gyles the clock 'round, wet food, wet clothes, wet bunks. Caold till, by cricky! I've lost the feel o' mee feet. An' wat for? For the bloomin' good chanst o' a slug in mee guts. That's wat for."

At little intervals the little vociferous colonial, Ally Bazan—he was red-haired and speckled—capered with rage, shaking his fists.

But Hardenberg only shifted his cigar to the other corner of his mouth. He knew Ally Bazan, and knew that the little fellow would have jeered at the offer of a first-cabin passage back to San Francisco in the swiftest, surest, steadiest passenger steamer that ever wore paint. So he remarked: "I ain't ever billed this promenade as a Coney Island picnic, I guess."

Nickerson—Slick Dick, the supercargo—was all that Hardenberg, who captained the schooner, could expect. He never interfered, never questioned; never protested in the name or interests of the Company when

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Hardenberg "hung on" in the bleak, bitter squalls till the *Bertha* was rail under and the sails hard as iron.

If it was true that he had once been a Methody revivalist no one, to quote Ally Bazan, "could 'a' smelled it off'n him." He was a black-bearded, scrawling six-footer, with a voice like a steam siren and a fist like a sledge. He carried two revolvers, spoke of the Russians at Point Barrow as the "Boomskys," and boasted if it came to *that* he'd engage to account for two of them, would shove their heads into their boot-legs and give them the running scrag, by God so he would!

Slowly, laboriously, beset in blinding fogs, swept with icy rains, buffeted and mauled and man-handled by the unending assaults of the sea, the *Bertha Millner* worked her way northward up that iron coast—till suddenly she entered an elysium.

Overnight she seemed to have run into it: it was a world of green, wooded islands, of smooth channels, of warm and steady winds, of cloudless skies. Coming on deck upon the morning of the *Bertha's* first day in this new region, Ally Bazan gazed open-mouthed. Then: "I s'y!" he yelled. "Hey! By crickey! Look!" He slapped his thighs. "S'trewth! This is 'eavenly."

Strokher was smoking his pipe on the hatch combings. "Rather," he observed. "An' I put it to you—we've deserved it."

In the main, however, the northward flitting was uneventful. Every fifth day Nickerson got drunk—on the Company's Corean champagne. Now that the weather had sweetened, the Three Black Crows had less to do in the way of handling and nursing the schooner. Their plans when the "Boomskys" should be reached were rehearsed over and over again. Then came spells of card and checker playing, story-telling, or hours of silent inertia when, man fashion, they brooded over pipes in a patch of sun, somnolent, the mind empty of all thought.

But at length the air took on a keener tang; there was a bite to the breeze, the sun lost his savour and the light of him lengthened till Hardenberg could read off logarithms at ten in the evening. Great-coats and sweaters were had from the chests, and it was no man's work to reef when the wind came down from out the north.

Each day now the schooner was drawing nearer the Arctic Circle. At length snow fell, and two days later they saw their first iceberg.

Hardenberg worked out their position on the chart and bore to the eastward till he made out the Alaskan coast—a smudge on the horizon. For another week he kept this in sight, the schooner dodging the bergs that by now drove by in squadrons, and even bumping and butling through drift and slush ice.

Seals were plentiful, and Hardenberg and Strokher promptly revived the quarrel of their respective nations. Once even they slew a mammoth bull walrus—astray from some northern herd—and played poker for the tusks. Then suddenly they pulled themselves sharply together, and, as it were, stood "attention." For more than a week the schooner, following the trend of the far-distant coast, had headed eastward, and now at length, looming out of the snow and out of the mist, a sombre bulwark, black, vast, ominous, rose the scarps and crags of that which they came so far to see—Point Barrow.

Hardenberg rounded the point, ran in under the lee of the land and brought out the chart which Ryder had given him. Then he shortened sail and moved west again till Barrow was "hull down" behind him. To the north was the Arctic, treacherous, nursing hurricanes, ice-sheathed; but close aboard, not a quarter of a mile off his counter, stretched a grey and gloomy land, barren, bleak as a dead planet, inhospitable as the moon.

For three days they crawled along the edge keeping their glasses trained upon every bay, every inlet. Then

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at length, early one morning, Ally Bazan, who had been posted at the bows, came scrambling aft to Hardenberg at the wheel. He was gasping for breath in his excitement.

"Hi! There we are," he shouted. "O Lord! Oh, I s'y! Now we're in fer it. That's them! That's them! By the great jumpin' jimminy Christmas, that's them fer fair! Strike me blind for a bleedin' gutter-cat if it eyent. O Lord! S'y, I gotta get drunk. S'y, what-all's the first jump in the bally game now?"

"Well, the first thing, little man," observed Hardenberg, "is for your mother's son to hang the monkey onto the safety-valve. Keep y'r steam and watch y'r uncle."

"Scrag the Boomskys," said Slick Dick encouragingly.

Strokher pulled the left end of his viking moustache with the fingers of his right hand.

"We must now talk," he said.

A last conference was held in the cabin, and the various parts of the comedy rehearsed. Also the three looked to their revolvers.

"Not that I expect a rupture of diplomatic relations," commented Strokher; "but if there's any shooting done, as between man and man, I choose to do it."

"All understood, then?" asked Hardenberg, looking from face to face. "There won't be no chance to ask questions once we set foot ashore."

The others nodded.

It was not difficult to get in with the seven Russian sea-otter fishermen at the post. Certain of them spoke a macerated English, and through these Hardenberg, Ally Bazan, and Nickerson—Strokher remained on board to look after the schooner—told to the "Boomskys" a lamentable tale of the reported wreck of a vessel described by Hardenberg, with laborious precision, as a steam whaler from San Francisco—the *Tiber* by name,

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bark-rigged, seven hundred tons burden, Captain Henry Ward Beecher, mate Mr. James Boss Tweed. They, the visitors, were the officers of the relief-ship on the lookout for castaways and survivors.

But in the course of these preliminaries it became necessary to restrain Nickerson—not yet wholly recovered from a recent incursion into the store of Corean champagne. It presented itself to his consideration as facetious to indulge (when speaking to the Russians) in strange and elaborate distortions of speech.

"And she sunk-avitch in a hundred fathom o' waterowski."

"—All on board-erewski."

"—Hell of dam' bad storm-onavna."

And he persisted in the idiocy till Hardenberg found an excuse for taking him aside and cursing him into a realization of his position.

In the end—inevitably—the schooner's company were invited to dine at the post.

It was a strange affair—a strange scene. The coast, flat, grey, dreary beyond all power of expression, lonesome as the interstellar space, and quite as cold, and in all that limitless vastness of the World's Edge, two specks—the hut, its three windows streaming with light, and the tiny schooner rocking in the offing. Over all flared the pallid incandescence of the auroras.

The Company drank steadily, and Strokher, listening from the schooner's quarterdeck, heard the shouting and the songs faintly above the wash and lapping under the counter. Two hours had passed since the moment he guessed that the feast had been laid. A third went by. He grew uneasy. There was no cessation of the noise of carousing. He even fancied he heard pistol shots. Then after a long time the noise by degrees wore down; a long silence followed. The hut seemed deserted; nothing stirred; another hour went by.

Then at length Strokher saw a figure emerge from the door of the hut and come down to the shore. It was Hardenberg. Strokher saw him wave his arm slowly, now to the left, now to the right, and he took down the wig-wag as follows: "Stand—in—closer—we—have—the—skins."

III

During the course of the next few days Strokher heard the different versions of the affair in the hut over and over again till he knew its smallest details. He learned how the "Boomskys" fell upon Ryder's champagne like wolves upon a wounded buck, how they drank it from "enamelled-ware" coffee-cups, from tin dippers, from the bottles themselves; how at last they even dispensed with the tedium of removing the corks and knocked off the heads against the table-ledge and drank from the splintered bottoms; how they quarrelled over the lees and dregs, how ever and always fresh supplies were forthcoming, and how at last Hardenberg, Ally Bazan, and Slick Dick stood up from the table in the midst of the seven inert bodies; how they ransacked the place for the priceless furs; how they failed to locate them; how the conviction grew that this was the wrong place after all, and how at length Hardenberg discovered the trap-door that admitted to the cellar, where in the dim light of the uplifted lanterns they saw, corded in tiny bales and packages, the costliest furs known to commerce.

Ally Bazan had sobbed in his excitement over that vision and did not regain the power of articulate speech till the "loot" was safely stowed in the 'tween-decks and Hardenberg had given order to come about.

"Now," he had observed dryly, "now, lads, it's Hongkong—or bust."

The tackle had fouled aloft and the jib hung slatting over the sprit like a collapsed balloon.

"Cast off up there, Nick!" called Hardenberg from the wheel.

Nickerson swung himself into the rigging, crying out in a mincing voice as, holding to a rope's end, he swung around to face the receding hut: "By-bye-skevitch. We've had *such* a charming evening. *Do* hope-sky we'll be able to come again-off." And as he spoke the lurch of the *Bertha* twitched his grip from the rope. He fell some thirty feet to the deck, and his head caromed against an iron cleat with a resounding crack.

"Here's luck," observed Hardenberg, twelve hours later, when Slick Dick, sitting on the edge of his bunk, looked stolidly and with fishy eyes from face to face. "We wa'n't quite short-handed enough, it seems."

"Dotty for fair. Dotty for fair," exclaimed Ally Bazan; "clean off 'is nut. I s'y, Dick-ol'-chap, wyke-up, naow. Buck up. Buck up. *'Ave* a drink."

But Nickerson could only nod his head and murmur: "A few more—consequently—and a good light—" Then his voice died down to unintelligible murmurs.

"We'll have to call at Juneau," decided Hardenberg two days later. "I don't figure on navigating this 'ere bath-tub to no Hongkong whatsoever, with three hands. We gotta pick up a couple o' A. B.'s in Juneau, if so be we can."

"How about the loot?" objected Strokher. "If one of those hands gets between decks he might smell—a sea-otter, now. I put it to you he might."

"My son," said Hardenberg, "I've handled A. B.'s before"; and that settled the question.

During the first part of the run down, Nickerson gloomed silently over the schooner, looking curiously about him, now at his comrades' faces, now at the tumbling grey-green seas, now—and this by the hour—at his own hands. He seemed perplexed, dazed, trying very hard to get his bearings. But by and by he ap-

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peared, little by little, to come to himself. One day he pointed to the rigging with an unsteady forefinger, then, laying the same finger doubtfully upon his lips, said to Strokher: "A ship?"

"Quite so, quite so, me boy."

"Yes," muttered Nickerson absently, "a ship—of course."

Hardenberg expected to make Juneau on a Thursday. Wednesday afternoon Slick Dick came to him. He seemed never more master of himself. "How did I come aboard?" he asked.

Hardenberg explained.

"What have we been doing?"

"Why, don't you remember?" continued Hardenberg. He outlined the voyage in detail. "Then you remember," he went on, "we got up there to Point Barrow and found where the Russian fellows had their post, where they caught sea-otters, and we went ashore and got 'em all full and lifted all the skins they had——"

"'Lifted'? You mean *stole* them."

"Come here," said the other. Encouraged by Nickerson's apparent convalescence, Hardenberg decided that the concrete evidence of things done would prove effective. He led him down into the 'tween-decks. "See now," he said. "See this packing-case"—he pried up a board—"see these 'ere skins. Take one in y'r hand. Remember how we found 'em all in the cellar and hyked 'em out while the beggars slept?"

"Stole them? You say we got—that is *you* did—got somebody intoxicated and stole their property, and now you are on your way to dispose of it."

"Oh, well, if you want to put it thataway. Sure we did."

"I understand—— Well—— Let's go back on deck. I want to think this out."

The *Bertha Millner* crept into the harbour of Juneau

in a fog, with ships' bells tolling on every side, let go her anchor at last in desperation and lay up to wait for the lifting. When this came the Three Crows looked at one another wide-eyed. They made out the drenched town and the dripping hills behind it. The quays, the custom house, the one hotel, and the few ships in the harbour. There were a couple of whalers from 'Frisco, a white, showily painted passenger boat from the same port, a Norwegian bark, and a freighter from Seattle grimy with coal-dust. These, however, the *Bertha's* company ignored. Another boat claimed all their attention. In the fog they had let go not a pistol-shot from her anchorage. She lay practically beside them. She was the United States revenue cutter *Bear*.

"But so long as they can't *smell* sea-otter skin," remarked Hardenberg, "I don't know that we're any the worse."

"All the syme," observed Ally Bazan, "I don't want to lose no bloomin' tyme a-pecking up aour bloomin' A. B.'s."

"I'll stay aboard and tend the baby," said Hardenberg with a wink. "You two move along ashore and get what you can—Scoovies for choice. Take Slick Dick with you. I reckon a change o' air might buck him up."

When the three had gone, Hardenberg, after writing up the painfully doctored log, set to work to finish a task on which the adventurers had been engaged in their leisure moments since leaving Point Barrow. This was the counting and sorting of the skins. The packing-case had been broken open, and the scanty but precious contents littered an improvised table in the hold. Pen in hand, Hardenberg counted and ciphered and counted again. He could not forbear a chuckle when the net result was reached. The lot of the skins—the pelt of the sea-otter is ridiculously small in proportion to its value—was no heavy load for the average man. But Harden-

berg knew that once the "loot" was safely landed at the Hongkong pierhead the Three Crows would share between them close upon ten thousand dollars. Even—if they had luck, and could dispose of the skins singly or in small lots—that figure might be doubled.

"And I call it a neat turn," observed Hardenberg. He was aroused by the noise of hurried feet upon the deck, and there was that in their sound that brought him upright in a second, hand on hip. Then, after a second, he jumped out on deck to meet Ally Bazan and Strokher, who had just scrambled over the rail.

"Bust. B-u-s-t!" remarked the Englishman.

"'Ere's 'ell to pay," cried Ally Bazan in a hoarse whisper, glancing over at the revenue cutter.

"Where's Nickerson?" demanded Hardenberg.

"That's it," answered the colonial. "That's where it's 'ell. Listen naow. He goes ashore along o' us, quiet and peaceable like, never battin' a eye, we givin' him a bit o' jolly, y' know, to keep him chirked up as ye might s'y. But so soon as ever he sets foot on shore, abaout faice he gaoes, plumb into the Custom's orfice. I s'ys, 'Wot all naow, messmite? Come along aout o' that.' But he turns on me like a bloomin' babby an s'ys he: 'Hands orf, wretch!' Ay, them's just his words. Just like that, 'Hands orf, wretch!' And then he nips into the orfice an' marches fair up to the desk an' s'ys like this—we heerd him, havin' followed on to the door—he s'ys, just like this:

"'Orfficer, I am a min'ster o' the gospel, o' the Methodis' denomineye-tion, an' I'm deteyined agin my will along o' a pirate ship which has robbed certain parties o' val-able goods. Which syme I'm pre-pared to attest afore a no'try public, an' lodge informeye-tion o' crime. An', s'ys he, 'I demand the protection o' the authorities an' arsk to be directed to the American consul.'

"S'y, we never wyted to hear no more, but hyked awye hot foot. S'y, wot all now. Oh, mee Gord! eyen't it a rum gao for fair? S'y, let's get aout o' here, Hardy, dear."

"Look there," said Hardenberg, jerking his head toward the cutter, "how far'd we get before the customs would 'a' passed the tip to *her* and she'd started to over-haul us? That's what they feed her for—to round up the likes o' us."

"We got to do something rather soon," put in Strokher. "Here comes the custom-house dinghy now."

As a matter of fact, a boat was putting off from the dock. At her stern fluttered the custom-house flag.

"Bitched—bitched for fair!" cried Ally Bazan.

"Quick, now!" exclaimed Hardenberg. "On the jump! Overboard with that loot!—or no. Steady! that won't do. There's that dam' cutter. They'd see it go. Here!—into the galley. There's a fire in the stove. Get a move on!"

"Wot!" wailed Ally Bazan. "Burn the little joker. Gord, I *can't*, Hardy, I *can't*. It's agin human nature."

"You can do time in San Quentin, then, for felony," retorted Strokher as he and Hardenberg dashed by him, their arms full of the skins. "You can do time in San Quentin else. Make your choice. I put it to you as between man and man."

With set teeth, and ever and again glancing over the rail at the oncoming boat, the two fed their fortune to the fire. The pelts, partially cured and still fatty, blazed like crude oil, the hair crisping, the hides melting into rivulets of grease. For a minute the schooner reeked of the smell and a stifling smoke poured from the galley stack. Then the embers of the fire guttered and a long whiff of sea wind blew away the reek. A single skin, fallen in the scramble, still remained on the floor of the galley. Hardenberg snatched it up, tossed it into the

flames and clapped the door to. "Now, let him squeal," he declared. "You fellows, when that boat gets here, let me talk; keep your mouths shut or, by God, we'll all wear stripes."

The Three Crows watched the boat's approach in a silence broken only once by a long whimper from Ally Bazan. "An' it was a-workin' out as lovely as Billy-oh," he said, "till that syme underbred costermonger's swipe remembered he was Methody—an' him who, only a few d'y's back, went raound s'yin' 'scrag the "Boomskys"!' A couple o' thousand pounds gone as quick as look at it. Oh, I eyn't never goin' to git over this."

The boat came up and the Three Crows were puzzled to note that no brass-buttoned personage sat in the stern-sheets, no harbour police glowered at them from the bow, no officer of the law fixed them with the eye of suspicion. The boat was manned only by a couple of freight handlers in woollen Jerseys, upon the breasts of which were affixed the two letters, "C. H."

"Say," called one of the freight-handlers, "is this the *Bertha Millner*?"

"Yes," answered Hardenberg, his voice at a growl. "An' what might you want with her, my friend?"

"Well, look here," said the other, "one of your hands came ashore mad as a coot and broke into the house of the American Consul, and resisted arrest and raised hell generally. The inspector says you got to send a provost guard or something ashore to take him off. There's been several mix-ups among ships' crews lately and the town——"

The tide drifted the boat out of hearing, and Hardenberg sat down on the capstan head, turning his back to his comrades. There was a long silence. Then he said:

"Boys, let's go home. I—I want to have a talk with President Ryder."

THE SHIP THAT SAW A GHOST

VERY much of this story must remain untold, for the reason that if it were definitely known what business I had aboard the tramp steam-freighter *Glarus*, three hundred miles off the South American coast on a certain summer's day, some few years ago, I would very like be obliged to answer a great many personal and direct questions put by fussy and impertinent experts in maritime law—who are paid to be inquisitive. Also, I would get "Ally Bazan," Strokher, and Hardenberg into trouble.

Suppose on that certain summer's day, you had asked of Lloyd's agency where the *Glarus* was, and what was her destination and cargo. You would have been told that she was twenty days out from Callao, bound north to San Francisco in ballast; that she had been spoken by the bark *Medea* and the steamer *Benevento*; that she was reported to have blown out a cylinder head, but being manageable was proceeding on her way under sail.

That is what Lloyd's would have answered.

If you know something of the ways of ships and what is expected of them, you will understand that the *Glarus*, to be some half a dozen hundred miles south of where Lloyd's would have her, and to be still going south, under full steam, was a scandal that would have made her brothers and sisters ostracize her finally and forever.

And that is curious, too. Humans may indulge in vagaries innumerable, and may go far afield in the way of lying; but a ship may not so much as quibble without suspicion. The least lapse of "regularity," the least

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difficulty in squaring performance with intuition, and behold she is on the black list, and her captain, owners, officers, agents, and consignors, and even supercargoes, are asked to explain.

And the *Glarus* was already on the black list. From the beginning her stars had been malign. As the *Breda*, she had first lost her reputation, seduced into a filibustering escapade down the South American coast, where in the end a plain-clothes United States detective—that is to say, a revenue cutter—arrested her off Buenos Ayres and brought her home, a prodigal daughter, besmirched and disgraced.

After that she was in some dreadful blackbirding business in a far quarter of the South Pacific; and after that—her name changed finally to the *Glarus*—poached seals for a syndicate of Dutchmen who lived in Tacoma, and who afterward built a club-house out of what she earned.

And after that we got her.

We got her, I say, through Ryder's South Pacific Exploitation Company. The "President" had picked out a lovely little deal for Hardenberg, Strokher, and Ally Bazan (the Three Black Crows), which he swore would make them "independent rich" the rest of their respective lives. It is a promising deal (B. 300 it is on Ryder's map), and if you want to know more about it you may write to ask Ryder what B. 300 is. If he chooses to tell you, that is his affair.

For B. 300—let us confess it—is, as Hardenberg puts it, as crooked as a dog's hind leg. It is as risky as barbary. If you pull it off you may—after paying Ryder his share—divide sixty-five, or possibly sixty-seven, thousand dollars between you and your associates. If you fail, and you are perilously like to fail, you will be sure to have a man or two of your companions shot, maybe yourself obliged to pistol certain people, and in

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the end fetch up at Tahiti, prisoner in a French patrol-boat.

Observe that B. 300 is spoken of as still open. It is so, for the reason that the Three Black Crows did not pull it off. It still stands marked up in red ink on the map that hangs over Ryder's desk in the San Francisco office; and anyone can have a chance at it who will meet Cyrus Ryder's terms. Only he can't get the *Glarus* for the attempt.

For the trip to the island after B. 300 was the last occasion on which the *Glarus* will smell blue water or taste the trades. She will never clear again. She is lumber.

And yet the *Glarus* on this very blessed day of 1902 is riding to her buoys off Sausalito in San Francisco Bay, complete in every detail (bar a broken propeller shaft), not a rope missing, not a screw loose, not a plank started — a perfectly equipped steam-freighter.

But you may go along the "Front" in San Francisco from Fisherman's Wharf to the China steamships' docks and shake your dollars under the seamen's noses, and if you so much as whisper *Glarus* they will edge suddenly off and look at you with scared suspicion, and then, as like as not, walk away without another word. No pilot will take the *Glarus* out; no captain will navigate her; no stoker will feed her fires; no sailor will walk her decks. The *Glarus* is suspect. She has seen a ghost.

* * * * *

It happened on our voyage to the island after this same B. 300. We had stood well off from shore for day after day, and Hardenberg had shaped our course so far from the track of navigation that since the *Benevento* had hulled down and vanished over the horizon no stitch of canvas nor smudge of smoke had we seen. We had passed the equator long since, and would fetch

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a long circuit to the south'ard, and bear up against the island by a circuitous route. This to avoid being spoken. It was tremendously essential that the *Glarus* should not be spoken.

I suppose, no doubt, that it was the knowledge of our isolation that impressed me with the dreadful remoteness of our position. Certainly the sea in itself looks no different at a thousand than at a hundred miles from shore. But as day after day I came out on deck at noon, after ascertaining our position on the chart (a mere pinpoint in a reach of empty paper), the sight of the ocean weighed down upon me with an infinitely great awesomeness—and I was no new hand to the high seas even then.

But at such times the *Glarus* seemed to me to be threading a loneliness beyond all worlds and beyond all conception desolate. Even in more populous waters, when no sail notches the line of the horizon, the propinquity of one's kind is nevertheless a thing understood, and to an unappreciated degree comforting. Here, however, I knew we were out, far out in the desert. Never a keel for years upon years before us had parted these waters; never a sail had bellied to these winds. Perfunctorily, day in and day out we turned our eyes through long habit toward the horizon. But we knew, before the look, that the searching would be bootless. Forever and forever, under the pitiless sun and cold blue sky stretched the indigo of the ocean floor. The ether between the planets can be no less empty, no less void.

I never, till that moment, could have so much as conceived the imagination of such loneliness, such utter stagnant abomination of desolation. In an open boat, bereft of comrades, I should have gone mad in thirty minutes.

I remember to have approximated the impression of

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such empty immensity only once before, in my younger days, when I lay on my back on a treeless, bushless mountain side and stared up into the sky for the better part of an hour.

You probably know the trick. If you do not, you must understand that if you look up at the blue long enough, the flatness of the thing begins little by little to expand, to give here and there; and the eye travels on and on and up and up, till at length (well for you that it lasts but the fraction of a second), you all at once see space. You generally stop there and cry out, and—your hands over your eyes—are only too glad to grovel close to the good old solid earth again. Just as I, so often on short voyages, was glad to wrench my eyes away from that horrid vacancy, to fasten them upon our sailless masts and stack, or to lay my grip upon the sooty smudged taffrail of the only thing that stood between me and the Outer Dark.

For we had come at last to that region of the Great Seas where no ship goes, the silent sea of Coleridge and the Ancient One, the unplumbed, untracked, uncharted Dreadfulness, primordial, hushed, and we were as much alone as a grain of star-dust whirling in the empty space beyond Uranus and the ken of the greater telescopes.

So the *Glarus* plodded and churned her way onward. Every day and all day the same pale-blue sky and the unwinking sun bent over that moving speck. Every day and all day the same black-blue water-world, untouched by any known wind, smooth as a slab of syenite, colourful as an opal, stretched out and around and beyond and before and behind us, forever, illimitable, empty. Every day the smoke of our fires veiled the streaked whiteness of our wake. Every day Hardenberg (our skipper) at noon pricked a pin-hole in the chart that hung in the wheel-house, and that showed we were so

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much farther into the wilderness. Every day the world of men, of civilization, of newspapers, policemen, and street-railways receded, and we steamed on alone, lost and forgotten in that silent sea.

"Jolly lot o' room to turn raound in," observed Ally Bazan, the colonial, "withaout steppin' on y'r neighbour's toes."

"We're clean, clean out o' the track o' navigation," Hardenberg told him. "An' a blessed good thing for us, too. Nobody ever comes down into these waters. Ye couldn't pick no course here. Everything leads to nowhere."

"Might as well be in a bally balloon," said Strokher.

I shall not tell of the nature of the venture on which the *Glarus* was bound, further than to say it was not legitimate. It had to do with an ill thing done more than two centuries ago. There was money in the venture, but it was not to be gained by a violation of metes and bounds which are better left intact.

The island toward which we were heading is associated in the minds of men with a Horror. A ship had called there once, two hundred years in advance of the *Glarus*—a ship not much unlike the crank high-prowed caravel of Hudson, and her company had landed, and having accomplished the evil they had set out to do, made shift to sail away. And then, just after the palms of the island had sunk from sight below the water's edge, the unspeakable had happened. The Death that was not Death had arisen from out the sea and stood before the ship, and over it, and the blight of the thing lay along the decks like mould, and the ship sweated in the terror of that which is yet without a name.

Twenty men died in the first week, all but six in the second. These six, with the shadow of insanity upon them, made out to launch a boat, returned to the island

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and died there, after leaving a record of what had happened.

The six left the ship exactly as she was, sails all set, lanterns all lit—left her in the shadow of the Death that was not Death.

She stood there, becalmed, and watched them go. She was never heard of again.

Or was she—well, that's as may be.

But the main point of the whole affair, to my notion, has always been this. The ship was the last friend of those six poor wretches who made back for the island with their poor chests of plunder. She was their guardian, as it were, would have defended and befriended them to the last; and also we, the Three Black Crows and myself, had no right under heaven, nor below the law of men, to come prying and peeping into this business—into this affair of the dead and buried past. There was sacrilege in it. We were no better than body-snatchers.

* * * * *

When I heard the others complaining of the loneliness of our surroundings, I said nothing at first. I was no sailor man, and I was on board only by tolerance. But I looked again at the maddening sameness of the horizon—the same vacant, void horizon that we had seen now for sixteen days on end, and felt in my wits and in my nerves that same formless rebellion and protest such as comes when the same note is reiterated over and over again.

It may seem a little thing that the mere fact of meeting with no other ship should have ground down the edge of the spirit. But let the incredulous—bound upon such a hazard as ours—sail straight into nothingness for sixteen days on end, seeing nothing but the sun, hearing nothing but the thresh of his own screw, and then put the question.

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And yet, of all things, we desired no company. Stealth was our one great aim. But I think there were moments —toward the last—when the Three Crows would have welcomed even a cruiser.

Besides, there was more cause for depression, after all, than mere isolation.

On the seventh day Hardenberg and I were forward by the cat-head, adjusting the grain with some half-formed intent of spearing the porpoises that of late had begun to appear under our bows, and Hardenberg had been computing the number of days we were yet to run.

"We were some five hundred odd miles off that island by now," he said, "and she's doing her thirteen knots handsome. All's well so far—but do you know, I'd just as soon raise that point o' land as soon as convenient."

"How so?" said I, bending on the line. "Expect some weather?"

"Mr. Dixon," said he, giving me a curious glance, "the sea is a queer proposition, put it any ways. I've been a seafarin' man since I was big as a minute, and I know the sea, and what's more, the Feel o' the sea. Now, look out yonder. Nothin', hey? Nothin' but the same ol' skyline we've watched all the way out. The glass is as steady as a steeple, and this ol' hooker, I reckon, is as sound as the day she went off the ways. But just the same if I were to home now, a-foolin' about Gloucester way in my little dough-dish—d'ye know what? I'd put into port. I sure would. Because why? Because I got the Feel o' the Sea, Mr. Dixon. I got the Feel o' the Sea."

I had heard old skippers say something of this before, and I cited to Hardenberg the experience of a skipper captain I once knew who had turned turtle in a calm sea off Trincomalee. I ask him what this Feel of the Sea was warning him against just now (for on the high sea any premonition is a premonition of evil, not of good). But he was not explicit.

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"I don't know," he answered moodily, and as if in great perplexity, coiling the rope as he spoke. "I don't know. There's some blame thing or other close to us, I'll bet a hat. I don't know the name of it, but there's a big Bird in the air, just out of sight som'eres, and," he suddenly exclaimed, smacking his knee and leaning forward, "I—don't—like—it—one—dam'—bit."

The same thing came up in our talk in the cabin that night, after the dinner was taken off and we settled down to tobacco. Only, at this time, Hardenberg was on duty on the bridge. It was Ally Bazan who spoke instead.

"Seems to me," he hazarded, "as haow they's some-thin' or other a-goin' to bump up pretty blyme soon. I shouldn't be surprised, naow, y'know, if we piled her up on some bally uncharted reef along o' to-night and went strite daown afore we'd had a bloomin' charnce to s'y 'So long, gen'lemen all.'"

He laughed as he spoke, but when, just at that moment, a pan clattered in the galley, he jumped suddenly with an oath, and looked hard about the cabin.

Then Strokher confessed to a sense of distress also. He'd been having it since day before yesterday, it seemed.

"And I put it to you the glass is lovely," he said, "so it's no blow. I guess," he continued, "we're all a bit seedy and ship-sore."

And whether or not this talk worked upon my own nerves, or whether in very truth the Feel of the Sea had found me also, I do not know; but I do know that after dinner that night, just before going to bed, a queer sense of apprehension came upon me, and that when I had come to my stateroom, after my turn upon deck, I became furiously angry with nobody in particular, because I could not at once find the matches. But here was

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a difference. The other man had been merely vaguely uncomfortable.

I could put a name to my uneasiness. I felt that we were being watched.

* * * * *

It was a strange ship's company we made after that. I speak only of the Crows and myself. We carried a scant crew of stokers, and there was also a chief engineer. But we saw so little of him that he did not count. The Crows and I gloomed on the quarterdeck from dawn to dark, silent, irritable, working upon each other's nerves till the creak of a block would make a man jump like cold steel laid to his flesh. We quarrelled over absolute nothings, glowered at each other for half a word, and each one of us, at different times, was at some pains to declare that never in the course of his career had he been associated with such a disagreeable trio of brutes. Yet we were always together, and sought each other's company with painful insistence.

Only once were we all agreed, and that was when the cook, a Chinaman, spoiled a certain batch of biscuits. Unanimously, with the vociferation of fishwives, we fell foul of the creature till he fled the cabin in actual fear of mishandling, leaving us suddenly seized with noisy hilarity—for the first time in a week. Hardenberg proposed a round of drinks from our single remaining case of beer. We stood up and formed an Elk's chain and then drained our glasses to each other's health with profound seriousness.

That same evening, I remember, we all sat on the quarterdeck till late and—oddly enough—related each one his life's history up to date; and then went down to the cabin for a game of euchre before turning in.

We had left Strokher on the bridge—it was his watch—and had forgotten all about him in the interest of the

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game, when—I suppose it was about one in the morning—I heard him whistle long and shrill. I laid down my cards and said:

“Hark!”

In the silence that followed we heard at first only the muffled lope of our engines, the cadenced snorting of the exhaust, and the ticking of Hardenberg’s big watch in his waistcoat that he had hung by the arm-hole to the back of his chair. Then from the bridge, above our deck, prolonged, intoned—a wailing cry in the night—came Strokher’s voice:

“Sail oh-h-h.”

And the cards fell from our hands, and, like men turned to stone, we sat looking at each other across the soiled red cloth for what seemed an immeasurably long minute.

Then stumbling and swearing, in a hysteria of hurry, we gained the deck.

There was a moon, very low and reddish, but no wind. The sea beyond the taffrail was as smooth as lava, and so still that the swells from the cutwater of the *Glarus* did not break as they rolled away from the bows.

I remember that I stood staring and blinking at the empty ocean—where the moonlight lay like a painted stripe reaching to the horizon—stupid and frowning, till Hardenberg, who had gone on ahead, cried:

“Not here—on the bridge!”

We joined Strokher, and as I came up the others were asking:

“Where? Where?”

And there, before he had pointed, I saw—we all of us saw— And I heard Hardenberg’s teeth come together like a spring trap, while Ally Bazan ducked as though to a blow, muttering:

“Gord ‘a’ mercy, what nyme do ye put to a ship like that?”

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And after that no one spoke for a long minute, and we stood there, moveless black shadows, huddled together for the sake of the blessed elbow touch that means so incalculably much, looking off over our port quarter.

For the ship that we saw there—oh, she was not a half-mile distant—was unlike any ship known to present-day construction.

She was short, and high-pooped, and her stern, which was turned a little toward us, we could see, was set with curious windows, not unlike a house. And on either side of this stern were two great iron cressets such as once were used to burn signal-fires in. She had three masts with mighty yards swung 'thwart ship, but bare of all sails save a few rotting streamers. Here and there about her a tangled mass of rigging drooped and sagged.

And there she lay, in the red eye of the setting moon, in that solitary ocean, shadowy, antique, forlorn, a thing the most abandoned, the most sinister I ever remember to have seen.

Then Strokher began to explain volubly and with many repetitions.

"A derelict, of course. I was asleep; yes, I was asleep. Gross neglect of duty. I say I was asleep—on watch. And we worked up to her. When I woke, why—you see, when I woke, there she was," he gave a weak little laugh, "and—and now, why, there she is, you see. I turned around and saw her sudden like—when I woke up, that is."

He laughed again, and as he laughed the engines far below our feet gave a sudden hiccough. Something crashed and struck the ship's sides till we lurched as we stood. There was a shriek of steam, a shout—and then silence.

The noise of the machinery ceased; the *Glarus* slid through the still water, moving only by her own decreasing momentum.

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Hardenberg sang, "Stand by!" and called down the tube to the engine-room.

"What's up?"

I was standing close enough to him to hear the answer in a small, faint voice:

"Shaft gone, sir."

"Broke?"

"Yes, sir."

Hardenberg faced about.

"Come below. We must talk." I do not think any of us cast a glance at the Other Ship again. Certainly I kept my eyes away from her. But as we started down the companionway I laid my hand on Strokher's shoulder. The rest were ahead. I looked him straight between the eyes as I asked:

"Were you asleep? Is that why you saw her so suddenly?"

It is now five years since I asked the question. I am still waiting for Strokher's answer.

Well, our shaft was broken. That was flat. We went down into the engine-room and saw the jagged fracture that was the symbol of our broken hopes. And in the course of the next five minutes' conversation with the chief we found that, as we had not provided against such a contingency, there was to be no mending of it. We said nothing about the mishap coinciding with the appearance of the Other Ship. But I know we did not consider the break with any degree of surprise after a few moments.

We came up from the engine-room and sat down to the cabin table.

"Now what?" said Hardenberg, by way of beginning.

Nobody answered at first.

It was by now three in the morning. I recall it all perfectly. The ports opposite where I sat were open and I could see. The moon was all but full set. The dawn

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was coming up with a copper murkiness over the edge of the world. All the stars were yet out. The sea, for all the red moon and copper dawn, was grey, and there, less than half a mile away, still lay our consort. I could see her through the portholes with each slow careening of the *Glarus*.

"I vote for the island," cried Ally Bazan, "shaft or no shaft. We rigs a bit o' syle, y'know——" and thereat the discussion began.

For upward of two hours it raged, with loud words and shaken forefingers, and great noisy bangings of the table, and how it would have ended I do not know, but at last—it was then maybe five in the morning—the lookout passed word down to the cabin:

"Will you come on deck, gentlemen?" It was the mate who spoke, and the man was shaken—I could see that—to the very vitals of him. We started and stared at one another, and I watched little Ally Bazan go slowly white to the lips. And even then no word of the ship, except as it might be this from Hardenberg:

"What is it? Good God Almighty, I'm no coward, but this thing is getting one too many for me."

Then without further speech he went on deck.

The air was cool. The sun was not yet up. It was that strange, queer mid-period between dark and dawn, when the night is over and the day not yet come, just the grey that is neither light nor dark, the dim dead blink as of the refracted light from extinct worlds.

We stood at the rail. We did not speak; we stood watching. It was so still that the drip of steam from some loosened pipe far below was plainly audible, and it sounded in that lifeless, silent greyness like—God knows what—a death tick.

"You see," said the mate, speaking just above a whisper, "there's no mistake about it. She is moving—this way."

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"Oh, a current, of course," Strokher tried to say cheerfully, "sets her toward us."

Would the morning never come?

Ally Bazan—his parents were Catholic—began to mutter to himself.

Then Hardenberg spoke aloud.

"I particularly don't want—that—out—there—to cross our bows. I don't want it to come to that. We must get some sails on her."

"And I put it to you as man to man," said Strokher, "where might be your wind."

He was right. The *Glarus* floated in absolute calm. On all that slab of ocean nothing moved but the Dead Ship.

She came on slowly; her bows, the high, clumsy bows pointed toward us, the water turning from her forefoot. She came on; she was near at hand. We saw her plainly—saw the rotted planks, the crumbling rigging, the rust-corroded metal-work, the broken rail, the gaping deck, and I could imagine that the clean water broke away from her sides in refluent wavelets as though in recoil from a thing unclean. She made no sound. No single thing stirred aboard the hulk of her—but she moved.

We were helpless. The *Glarus* could stir no boat in any direction; we were chained to the spot. Nobody had thought to put out our lights, and they still burned on through the dawn, strangely out of place in their red-and-green garishness, like maskers surprised by daylight.

And in the silence of that empty ocean, in that queer half-light between dawn and day, at six o'clock, silent as the settling of the dead to the bottomless bottom of the ocean, grey as fog, lonely, blind, soulless, voiceless, the Dead Ship crossed our bows.

I do not know how long after this the Ship disappeared, or what was the time of day when we at last pulled ourselves together. But we came to some sort of

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decision at last. This was to go on—under sail. We were too close to the island now to turn back for—for a broken shaft.

The afternoon was spent fitting on the sails to her, and when after nightfall the wind at length came up fresh and favourable, I believe we all felt heartened and a deal more hardy—until the last canvas went aloft, and Hardenberg took the wheel.

We had drifted a good deal since the morning, and the bows of the *Glarus* were pointed homeward, but as soon as the breeze blew strong enough to get steerageway Hardenberg put the wheel over and, as the booms swung across the deck, headed for the island again.

We had not gone on this course half an hour—no, not twenty minutes—before the wind shifted a whole quarter of the compass and took the *Glarus* square in the teeth, so that there was nothing for it but to tack. And then the strangest thing befell.

I will make allowance for the fact that there was no centre-board nor keel to speak of to the *Glarus*. I will admit that the sails upon a nine-hundred-ton freighter are not calculated to speed her, nor steady her. I will even admit the possibility of a current that set from the island toward us. All this may be true, yet the *Glarus* should have advanced. We should have made a wake.

And instead of this, our stolid, steady, trusty old boat was—what shall I say?

I will say that no man may thoroughly understand a ship—after all. I will say that new ships are cranky and unsteady; that old and seasoned ships have their little crotchets, their little fussinesses that their skippers must learn and humour if they are to get anything out of them; that even the best ships may sulk at times, shirk their work, grow unstable, perverse, and refuse to answer helm and handling. And I will say that some ships that for years have sailed blue water as soberly and as

docilely as a street-car horse has plodded the treadmill of the 'tween-tracks, have been known to balk, as stubbornly and as conclusively as any old Bay Billy that ever wore a bell. I know this has happened, because I have seen it. I saw, for instance, the *Glarus* do it.

Quite literally and truly we could do nothing with her. We will say, if you like, that that great jar and wrench when the shaft gave way shook her and crippled her. It is true, however, that whatever the cause may have been, we could not force her toward the island. Of course, we all said "current"; but why didn't the log-line trail?

For three days and three nights we tried it. And the *Glarus* heaved and plunged and shook herself just as you have seen a horse plunge and rear when his rider tries to force him at the steam-roller.

I tell you I could feel the fabric of her tremble and shudder from bow to stern-post, as though she were in a storm; I tell you she fell off from the wind, and broad-on drifted back from her course till the sensation of her shrinking was as plain as her own staring lights and a thing pitiful to see.

We rowelled her, and we crowded sail upon her, and we coaxed and bullied and humoured her, till the Three Crows, their fortune only a plain sail two days ahead, raved and swore like insensate brutes, or shall we say like mahouts trying to drive their stricken elephant upon the tiger—and all to no purpose. "Damn the damned current and the damned luck and the damned shaft and all," Hardenberg would exclaim, as from the wheel he would catch the *Glarus* falling off. "Go on, you old hooker—you tub of junk! My God, you'd think she was scared!"

Perhaps the *Glarus* was scared, perhaps not; that point is debatable. But it was beyond doubt of debate that Hardenberg was scared.

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A ship that will not obey is only one degree less terrible than a mutinous crew. And we were in a fair way to have both. The stokers, whom we had impressed into duty as A. B.'s, were of course superstitious; and they knew how the *Glarus* was acting, and it was only a question of time before they got out of hand.

That was the end. We held a final conference in the cabin and decided that there was no help for it—we must turn back.

And back we accordingly turned, and at once the wind followed us, and the "current" helped us, and the water churned under the forefoot of the *Glarus*, and the wake whitened under her stern, and the log-line ran out from the trail and strained back as the ship worked homeward.

We had never a mishap from the time we finally swung her about; and, considering the circumstances, the voyage back to San Francisco was propitious.

But an incident happened just after we had started back. We were perhaps some five miles on the homeward track. It was early evening and Strokher had the watch. At about seven o'clock he called me up on the bridge.

"See her?" he said.

And there, far behind us, in the shadow of the twilight, loomed the Other Ship again, desolate, lonely beyond words. We were leaving her rapidly astern. Strokher and I stood looking at her till she dwindled to a dot. Then Strokher said:

"She's on post again."

And when months afterward we limped into the Golden Gate and cast anchor off the "Front" our crew went ashore as soon as discharged, and in half a dozen hours the legend was in every sailors' boarding-house and in every seaman's dive, from Barbary Coast to Black Tom's.

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It is still there, and that is why no pilot will take the *Glarus* out, no captain will navigate her, no stoker feed her fires, no sailor walk her decks. The *Glarus* is suspect. She will never smell blue water again, nor taste the trades. She has seen a Ghost.

THE GHOST IN THE CROSSTREES

CYRUS RYDER, the President of the South Pacific Exploitation Company, had at last got hold of a "proposition"—all Ryder's schemes were, in his vernacular, "propositions"—that was not only profitable beyond precedent or belief, but that also was, wonderful to say, more or less legitimate. He had got an "island." He had not discovered it. Ryder had not felt a deck under his shoes for twenty years other than the promenade deck of the ferry-boat *San Rafael*, that takes him home to Berkeley every evening after "business hours." He had not discovered it, but "Old Rosemary," captain of the barkentine *Scottish Chief*, of Blyth, had done that very thing, and, dying before he was able to perfect the title, had made over his interest in it to his best friend and old comrade, Cyrus Ryder.

"Old Rosemary," I am told, first landed on the island—it is called Paa—in the later '60's. He established its location and took its latitude and longitude, but as minutes and degrees mean nothing to the lay reader, let it be said that the Island of Paa lies just below the equator, some 200 miles west of the Gilberts and 1,600 miles due east from Brisbane, in Australia. It is six miles long, three wide, and because of the prevailing winds and precipitous character of the coast can only be approached from the west during December and January.

"Old Rosemary" landed on the island, raised the American flag, had the crew witness the document by

virtue of which he made himself the possessor, and then, returning to San Francisco, forwarded to the Secretary of State, at Washington, application for title. This was withheld till it could be shown that no other nation had a prior claim. While "Old Rosemary" was working out the proof, he died, and the whole matter was left in abeyance till Cyrus Ryder took it up. By then there was a new Secretary in Washington and times were changed, so that the Government of Ryder's native land was not so averse toward acquiring Eastern possessions. The Secretary of State wrote to Ryder to say that the application would be granted upon furnishing a bond for \$50,000; and you may believe that the bond was forthcoming.

For in the first report upon Paa, "Old Rosemary" had used the magic word "guano." He averred, and his crew attested over their sworn statements, that Paa was covered to an average depth of six feet with the stuff, so that this last and biggest of "Cy" Ryder's propositions was a vast slab of an extremely marketable product six feet thick, three miles wide, and six miles long.

But no sooner had the title been granted when there came a dislocation in the proceedings that until then had been going forward so smoothly. Ryder called the Three Black Crows to him at this juncture, one certain afternoon in the month of April. They were his best agents. The plums that the "Company" had at its disposal generally went to the trio, and if any man could "put through" a dangerous and desperate piece of work, Strokher, Hardenberg, and Ally Bazan were those men.

Of late they had been unlucky, and the affair of the contraband arms, which had ended in failure of cataclysmic proportions, yet rankled in Ryder's memory, but he had no one else to whom he could intrust the present proposition and he still believed Hardenberg to be the best boss on his list.

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If Paa was to be fought for, Hardenberg, backed by Strokher and Ally Bazan, was the man of all men for the job, for it looked as though Ryder would not get the Island of Paa without a fight, after all, and nitrate beds were worth fighting for.

"You see, boys, it's this way," Ryder explained to the three as they sat around the spavined table in the grimy back room of Ryder's "office." "It's this way. There's a scoovy after Paa, I'm told; he says he was there before 'Rosemary,' which is a lie, and that his Gov'ment has given him title. He's got a kind of dough-dish up Portland way and starts for Paa as soon as ever he kin fit out. He's got no title, in course, but if he gits there afore we do and takes possession it'll take fifty years o' lawing an' injunctioning to git him off. So hustle is the word for you from the word 'go.' We got a good start o' the scoovy. He can't put to sea within a week, while over yonder in Oakland Basin there's the *Idaho Lass*, as good a schooner, boys, as ever wore paint, all ready but to fit new sails on her. Ye kin do it in less than no time. The stores will be goin' into her while ye're workin', and within the week I expect to see the *Idaho Lass* showing her heels to the Presidio. You see the point now, boys. If ye beat the scoovy—his name is Petersen, and his boat is called the *Elftruda*—we're to wind'ard of a pretty pot o' money. If he gets away before you do—well, there's no telling; we prob'ly lose the island."

II

About ten days before the morning set for their departure I went over to the Oakland Basin to see how the Three Black Crows were getting on.

Hardenberg welcomed me as my boat bumped alongside, and extending a great tarry paw, hauled me over the rail. The schooner was a wilderness of

confusion, with the sails covering, apparently, nine tenths of the decks, the remaining tenth encumbered by spars, cordage, tangled rigging, chains, cables, and the like, all helter-skeltered together in such a haze of entanglements that my heart misgave me as I looked on it. Surely order would not issue from this chaos in four days' time with only three men to speed the work.

But Hardenberg was reassuring, and little Ally Bazan, the colonial, told me they would "snatch her shipshape in the shorter end o' two days, if so be they must."

I stayed with the Three Crows all that day and shared their dinner with them on the quarterdeck when, wearied to death with the strain of wrestling with the slatting canvas and ponderous boom, they at last threw themselves upon the hamper of "cold snack" I had brought off with me and pledged the success of the venture in tin dippers full of Pilsener.

"And I'm thinking," said Ally Bazan, "as 'ow ye might as well turn in along o' us on board 'ere, instead o' hykin' back to town to-night. There's a fairish set o' currents up and daown 'ere about this time o' dye, and ye'd find it a stiff bit o' rowing."

"We'll sling a hammick for you on the quarterdeck, m'son," urged Hardenberg.

And so it happened that I passed my first night aboard the *Idaho Lass*.

We turned in early. The Three Crows were very tired, and only Ally Bazan and I were left awake at the time when we saw the 8:30 ferryboat negotiating for her slip on the Oakland side. Then we also went to bed.

And now it becomes necessary, for a better understanding of what is to follow, to mention with some degree of particularization the places and manners in which my three friends elected to take their sleep, as

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well as the condition and berth of the schooner *Idaho Lass*.

Hardenberg slept upon the quarterdeck, rolled up in an army blanket and a tarpaulin. Strokher turned in below in the cabin upon the fixed lounge by the dining table, while Ally Bazan stretched himself in one of the bunks in the fo'c's'le.

As for the location of the schooner, she lay out in the stream, some three or four cables' length off the yards and docks of a ship-building concern. No other ship or boat of any description was anchored nearer than at least 300 yards. She was a fine, roomy vessel, three-masted, about 150 feet in length over all. She lay head up stream, and from where I lay by Hardenberg on the quarterdeck I could see her tops sharply outlined against the sky above the Golden Gate before I went to sleep.

I suppose it was very early in the morning—nearer two than three—when I awoke. Some movement on the part of Hardenberg—as I afterward found out—had aroused me. But I lay inert for a long minute trying to find out why I was not in my own bed, in my own home, and to account for the rushing, rippling sound of the tide eddies sucking and chuckling around the *Lass*'s rudder-post.

Then I became aware that Hardenberg was awake. I lay in my hammock, facing the stern of the schooner, and as Hardenberg had made up his bed between me and the wheel he was directly in my line of vision when I opened my eyes, and I could see him without any other movement than that of raising the eyelids. Just now, as I drifted more and more into wakefulness, I grew proportionately puzzled and perplexed to account for a singularly strange demeanour and conduct on the part of my friend.

He was sitting up in his place, his knees drawn up

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under the blanket, one arm thrown around both, the hand of the other arm resting on the neck and supporting the weight of his body. He was broad awake. I could see the green shine of our riding lantern in his wide-open eyes, and from time to time I could hear him muttering to himself, "What is it? What is it? What the devil is it, anyhow?" But it was not his attitude, nor the fact of his being so broad awake at the unseasonable hour, nor yet his unaccountable words, that puzzled me the most. It was the man's eyes and the direction in which they looked that startled me.

His gaze was directed not upon anything on the deck of the boat, nor upon the surface of the water near it, but upon something behind me and at a great height in the air. I was not long in getting myself broad awake.

III

I rolled out on the deck and crossed over to where Hardenberg sat huddled in his blankets.

"What the devil——" I began.

He jumped suddenly at the sound of my voice, then raised an arm and pointed toward the top of the foremast.

"D'ye see it?" he muttered. "Say, huh? D'ye see it? I thought I saw it last night, but I wasn't sure. But there's no mistake now. D'ye see it, Mr. Dixon?"

I looked where he pointed. The schooner was riding easily to anchor, the surface of the bay was calm, but overhead the high white sea-fog was rolling in. Against it the foremast stood out like the hand of an illuminated town clock, and not a detail of its rigging that was not as distinct as if etched against the sky.

And yet I saw nothing.

"Where?" I demanded, and again and again "where?"

"In the crosstrees," whispered Hardenberg. "Ah, look there."

He was right. Something was stirring there, something that I had mistaken for the furled tops'l. At first it was but a formless bundle, but as Hardenberg spoke it stretched itself, it grew upright, it assumed an erect attitude, it took the outlines of a human being. From head to heel a casing housed it in, a casing that might have been anything at that hour of the night and in that strange place—a shroud, if you like, a winding-sheet—anything; and it is without shame that I confess to a creep of the most disagreeable sensation I have ever known as I stood at Hardenberg's side on that still, foggy night and watched the stirring of that nameless, formless shape standing gaunt and tall and grisly and wrapped in its winding-sheet upon the crosstrees of the foremast of the *Idaho Lass*.

We watched and waited, breathless for an instant. Then the creature on the foremast laid a hand upon the lashings of the tops'l and undid them. Then it turned, slid to the deck by I know not what strange process, and, still hooded, still shrouded, still lapped about by its mummy-wrappings, seized a rope's end. In an instant the jib was set and stood on hard and billowing against the night wind. The tops'l followed. Then the figure moved forward and passed behind the companionway of the fo'c'sle.

We looked for it to appear upon the other side, but looked in vain. We saw it no more that night.

What Hardenberg and I told each other between the time of the disappearing and the hour of breakfast I am now ashamed to recall. But at last we agreed to say nothing to the others—for the time being. Just after breakfast, however, we two had a few words by the wheel on the quarterdeck. Ally Bazan and Strokher were forward.

"The proper thing to do," said I—it was a glorious, exhilarating morning, and the sunlight was flooding

every angle and corner of the schooner—"the proper thing to do is to sleep on deck by the foremast to-night with our pistols handy and interview the—party if it walks again."

"Oh, yes," cried Hardenberg heartily. "Oh, yes; that's the proper thing. Of course it is. No manner o' doubt about that, Mr. Dixon. Watch for the party—yes, with pistols. Of course it's the proper thing. But I know one man that ain't going to do no such thing."

"Well," I remember to have said reflectively, "well—I guess I know another."

But for all our resolutions to say nothing to the others about the night's occurrences, we forgot that the tops'l and jib were both set and both drawing.

"An' w'at might be the bloomin' notion o' setting the bloomin' kite and jib?" demanded Ally Bazan not half an hour after breakfast. Shamelessly Hardenberg, at a loss for an answer, feigned an interest in the grum-mets of the life-boat cover and left me to lie as best I might.

But it is not easy to explain why one should raise the sails of an anchored ship during the night, and Ally Bazan grew very suspicious. Strokher, too, had something to say, and in the end the whole matter came out.

Trust a sailor to give full value to anything savouring of the supernatural. Strokher promptly voted the ship a "queer old hooker anyhow, and about as seaworthy as a hen-coop." He held forth at great length upon the subject.

"You mark my words, now," he said. "There's been some fishy doin's in this 'ere vessel, and it's like somebody done to death crool hard, an' 'e wants to git away from the smell o' land, just like them as is killed on blue water. That's w'y 'e takes an' sets the sails between dark an' dawn."

But Ally Bazan was thoroughly and wholly upset, so

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much so that at first he could not speak. He went pale and paler while we stood talking it over, and crossed himself—he was a Catholic!—furtively behind the water-butt.

"I ain't never 'a' been keen on ha'nts anyhow, Mr. Dixon," he told me aggrievedly at dinner that evening. "I got no use for 'em. I ain't never known any good to come o' anything with a ha'nt tagged to it, an' we're makin' a ill beginnin' o' this island business, Mr. Dixon—a blyme ill beginnin'. I mean to stye awyke to-night."

But if he was awake the little colonial was keeping close to his bunk at the time when Strokher and Hardenberg woke me at about three in the morning.

I rolled out and joined them on the quarterdeck and stood beside them watching. The same figure again towered, as before, grey and ominous in the crosstrees. As before, it set the tops'l; as before, it came down to the deck and raised the jib; as before, it passed out of sight amid the confusion of the forward deck.

But this time we all ran toward where we last had seen it, stumbling over the encumbered decks, jostling and tripping, but keeping wonderfully close together. It was not twenty seconds from the time the creature had disappeared before we stood panting upon the exact spot we had last seen it. We searched every corner of the forward deck in vain. We looked over the side. The moon was up. This night there was no fog. We could see for miles each side of us, but never a trace of a boat was visible, and it was impossible that any swimmer could have escaped the merciless scrutiny to which we subjected the waters of the bay in every direction.

Hardenberg and I dived down into the fo'c's'le. Ally Bazan was sound asleep in his bunk and woke stammering, blinking, and bewildered by the lantern we carried.

"I sye," he cried, all at once scrambling up and clawing at our arms. "D'd the bally ha'nt show up agyne?"

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And as we nodded he went on more aggrievedly than ever—"Oh, I sye, y' know, I daon't like this. I eyen't shipping in no bloomin' 'ooker wot carries a ha'nt for supercargo. They waon't no good come o' this cruise—no, they waon't. It's a sign, that's wot it is. I eyen't goin' to buck again no signs—it eyen't human nature, no, it eyen't. You mark my words, 'Bud' Hardenberg, we clear this port with a ship wot has a ha'nt an' we waon't never come back agyne, my hearty."

That night he berthed aft with us on the quarterdeck, but though we stood watch and watch till well into the dawn, nothing stirred about the foremast. So it was the next night, and so the night after that. When three successive days had passed without any manifestation the keen edge of the business became a little blunted and we declared that an end had been made.

Ally Bazan returned to his bunk in the fo'c's'le on the fourth night, and the rest of us slept the hours through unconcernedly.

But in the morning there were the jib and tops'l set and drawing as before.

IV

After this we began experimenting—on Ally Bazan. We bunked him forward and we bunked him aft, for someone had pointed out that the "ha'nt" walked only at the times when the colonial slept in the fo'c's'le. We found this to be true. Let the little fellow watch on the quarterdeck with us and the night passed without disturbance. As soon as he took up his quarters forward the haunting recommenced. Furthermore, it began to appear that the "ha'nt" carefully refrained from appearing to him. He of us all had never seen the thing. He of us all was spared the chills and the harrowings that laid hold upon the rest of us during these still grey hours after midnight when we huddled on the deck of the

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Idaho Lass and watched the sheeted apparition in the rigging; for by now there was no more charging forward in attempts to run the ghost down. We had passed that stage long since.

But so far from rejoicing in this immunity or drawing courage therefrom, Ally Bazan filled the air with his fears and expostulations. Just the fact that he was in some way differentiated from the others—that he was singled out, if only for exemption—worked upon him. And that he was unable to scale his terrors by actual sight of their object excited them all the more.

And there issued from this a curious consequence. He, the very one who had never seen the haunting, was also the very one to unsettle what little common sense yet remained to Hardenberg and Strokher. He never allowed the subject to be ignored—never lost an opportunity of referring to the doom that o'erhung the vessel. By the hour he poured into the ears of his friends lugubrious tales of ships, warned as this one was, that had cleared from port, never to be seen again. He recalled to their minds parallel incidents that they themselves had heard; he foretold the fate of the *Idaho Lass* when the land should lie behind and she should be alone in mid-ocean with this horrid supercargo that took liberties with the rigging, and at last one particular morning, two days before that which was to witness the schooner's departure, he came out flatfooted to the effect that "Gaw-blyme him, he couldn't stand the gaff no longer, no, he couldn't, so help him, that if the owners were wishful for to put to sea" (doomed to some unnamable destruction) "he for one wa'n't fit to die, an' was going to quit that blessed day."

For the sake of appearances, Hardenberg and Strokher blustered and fumed, but I could hear the crack in Strokher's voice as plain as in a broken ship's bell. I was not surprised at what happened later in the day,

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when he told the others that he was a very sick man. A congenital stomach trouble, it seemed—or was it liver complaint—had found him out again. He had contracted it when a lad at Trincomalee, diving for pearls; it was acutely painful, it appeared. Why, gentlemen, even at that very moment, as he stood there talking—Hi, yi! O Lord!—talking, it was a-griping of him something uncommon, so it was. And no, it was no manner of use for him to think of going on this voyage; sorry he was, too, for he'd made up his mind, so he had, to find out just what was wrong with the foremast, etc.

And thereupon Hardenberg swore a great oath and threw down the capstan bar he held in his hand.

"Well, then," he cried wrathfully, "we might as well chuck up the whole business. No use going to sea with a sick man and a scared man."

"An' there's the first word o' sense," cried Ally Bazan, "I've heard this long day. 'Scared,' he says; aye, right ye are, me bully."

"It's Cy Rider's fault," the three declared after a two-hours' talk. "No business giving us a schooner with a ghost aboard. Scoovy or no scoovy, island or no island, guano or no guano, we don't go to sea in the haunted hooker called the *Idaho Lass*."

No more they did. On board the schooner they had faced the supernatural with some kind of courage born of the occasion. Once on shore, and no money could hire, no power force them to go aboard a second time.

The affair ended in a grand wrangle in Cy Rider's back office, and just twenty-four hours later the bark *Elftruda*, Captain Jens Petersen, cleared from Portland, bound for "a cruise to South Pacific ports—in ballast."

* * * * *

Two years after this I took Ally Bazan with me on a duck-shooting excursion in the "Toolies" back of

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Sacramento, for he is a handy man about a camp and can row a boat as softly as a drifting cloud.

We went about in a cabin cat of some thirty feet over all, the rowboat towing astern. Sometimes we did not go ashore to camp, but slept aboard. On the second night of this expedient I woke in my blankets on the floor of the cabin to see the square of grey light that stood for the cabin door darkened by—it gave me the same old start—a sheeted figure. It was going up the two steps to the deck. Beyond question it had been in the cabin. I started up and followed it. I was too frightened not to—if you can see what I mean. By the time I had got the blankets off and had thrust my head above the level of the cabin hatch the figure was already in the bows, and, as a matter of course, hoisting the jib.

I thought of calling Ally Bazan, who slept by me on the cabin floor, but it seemed to me at the time that if I did not keep that figure in sight it would elude me again, and, besides, if I went back in the cabin I was afraid that I would bolt the door and remain under the bedclothes till morning. I was afraid to go on with the adventure, but I was much more afraid to go back.

So I crept forward over the deck of the sloop. The "ha'nt" had its back toward me, fumbling with the ends of the jib halyards. I could hear the creak of new ropes as it undid the knot, and the sound was certainly substantial and commonplace. I was so close by now that I could see every outline of the shape. It was precisely as it had appeared on the crosstrees of the *Idaho*, only, seen without perspective, and brought down to the level of the eye, it lost its exaggerated height.

It had been kneeling upon the deck. Now, at last, it rose and turned about, the end of the halyards in its hand. The light of the earliest dawn fell squarely on the face and form, and I saw, if you please, Ally Bazan

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himself. His eyes were half shut, and through his open lips came the sound of his deep and regular breathing.

At breakfast the next morning I asked, "Ally Bazan, did you ever walk in your sleep?"

"Aye," he answered, "years ago, when I was by wye o' being a lad, I used allus to wrap the bloomin' sheets around me. An' crysy things I'd do the times. But the 'abit left me when I grew old enough to tyke me whisky strite and have hair on me fyce."

I did not "explain away" the ghost in the crosstrees either to Ally Bazan or to the other two Black Crows. Furthermore, I do not now refer to the Island of Paa in the hearing of the trio. The claims and title of Norway to the island have long since been made good and conceded—even by the State Department at Washington—and I understand that Captain Petersen has made a very pretty fortune out of the affair.

THE RIDING OF FELIPE

I

FELIPE

AS YOUNG Felipe Arillaga guided his pony out of the last intricacies of Pacheco Pass, he was thinking of Rubia Ytuerate and of the scene he had had with her a few days before. He reconstructed it now very vividly. Rubia had been royally angry, and as she had stood before him, her arms folded and her teeth set, he was forced to admit that she was as handsome a woman as could be found through all California.

There had been a time, three months past, when Felipe found no compulsion in the admission, for though betrothed to Buelna Martiarena he had abruptly conceived a violent infatuation for Rubia, and had remained a guest upon her rancho many weeks longer than he had intended.

For three months he had forgotten Buelna entirely. At the end of that time he had remembered her—had awakened to the fact that his infatuation for Rubia *was* infatuation, and had resolved to end the affair and go back to Buelna as soon as it was possible.

But Rubia was quick to notice the cooling of his passion. First she fixed him with oblique suspicion from under her long lashes, then avoided him, then kept him at her side for days together. Then at last—his defection unmistakable—turned on him with furious demands for the truth.

Felipe had snatched occasion with one hand and courage with the other.

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"Well," he had said, "well, it is not my fault. Yes, it is the truth. It is played out."

He had not thought it necessary to speak of Buelna; but Rubia divined the other woman.

"So you think you are to throw me aside like that. Ah, it is played out, is it, Felipe Arillaga? You listen to me. Do not fancy for one moment you are going back to an old love, or on to a new one. You listen to me," she had cried, her fist over her head. "I do not know who she is, but my curse is on her, Felipe Arillaga. My curse is on her who next kisses you. May that kiss be a blight to her. From that moment may evil cling to her, bad luck follow her; may she love and not be loved; may friends desert her, enemies beset her, her sisters shame her, her brothers disown her, and those whom she has loved abandon her. May her body waste as your love for me has wasted; may her heart be broken as your promises to me have been broken; may her joy be as fleeting as your vows, and her beauty grow as dim as your memory of me. I have said it."

"So be it!" Felipe had retorted with vast nonchalance, and had flung out from her presence to saddle his pony and start back to Buelna.

But Felipe was superstitious. He half believed in curses, had seen two-headed calves born because of them, and sheep stampeded over cliffs for no other reason.

Now, as he drew out of Pacheco Pass and came down into the valley the idea of Rubia and her curse troubled him. At first, when yet three days' journey from Buelna, it had been easy to resolve to brave it out. But now he was already on the Rancho Martiarena (had been travelling over it for the last ten hours, in fact), and in a short time would be at the *hacienda* of Martiarena, uncle and guardian of Buelna. He would see Buelna, and she, believing always in his fidelity, would expect to kiss him.

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"Well, this is to be thought about," murmured Felipe uneasily.

He touched up the pony with one of his enormous spurs.

"Now I know what I will do," he thought. "I will go to San Juan Bautista and confess and be absolved, and will buy candles. Then afterward will go to Buelna."

He found the road that led to the Mission and turned into it, pushing forward at a canter. Then suddenly at a sharp turning reined up just in time to avoid colliding with a little cavalcade.

He uttered an exclamation under his breath.

At the head of the cavalcade rode old Martiarena himself, and behind him came a *peon* or two, then Manuela, the aged housekeeper, and—after a fashion—duenna. Then at her side, on a saddle of red leather with silver bosses, which was cinched about the body of a very small white burro, Buelna herself.

She was just turned sixteen, and being of the best blood of the mother kingdom (the strain dating back to the Ostrogothic invasion), was fair. Her hair was blonde, her eyes blue-grey, her eyebrows and lashes dark brown, and as he caught sight of her Felipe wondered how he ever could have believed the swarthy Rubia beautiful.

There was a jubilant meeting. Old Martiarena kissed both his cheeks, patting him on the back.

"Oh, ho!" he cried. "Once more back. We have just returned from the feast of the Santa Cruz at the Mission, and Buelna prayed for your safe return. Go to ber, boy. She has waited long for this hour."

Felipe, his eyes upon those of his betrothed, advanced. She was looking at him and smiling. As he saw the unmistakable light in her blue eyes, the light he knew she had kept burning for him alone, Felipe could have abased himself to the very hoofs of her burro. Could it be possible he had ever forgotten her for such a one

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as Rubia—have been unfaithful to this dear girl for so much as the smallest fraction of a minute?

"You are welcome, Felipe," she said. "Oh, very, very welcome." She gave him her hand and turned her face to his. But it was her hand and not her face the young man kissed. Old Martiarena, who looked on, shook with laughter.

"Hoh! a timid lover this," he called. "We managed different when I was a lad. Her lips, Felipe. Must an old man teach a youngster gallantry?"

Buelna blushed and laughed, but yet did not withdraw her hand nor turn her face away. There was a delicate expectancy in her manner that she nevertheless contrived to make compatible with her native modesty. Felipe had been her acknowledged lover ever since the two were children.

"Well?" cried Martiarena as Felipe hesitated.

Even then, if Felipe could have collected his wits, he might have saved the situation for himself. But no time had been allowed him to think. Confusion seized upon him. All that was clear in his mind were the last words of Rubia. It seemed to him that between his lips he carried a poison deadly to Buelna above all others. Stupidly, brutally he precipitated the catastrophe.

"No," he exclaimed seriously, abruptly drawing his hand from Buelna's, "no. It may not be. I cannot."

Martiarena stared. Then:

"Is this a jest, señor?" he demanded. "An ill-timed one, then."

"No," answered Felipe, "it is not a jest."

"But, Felipe," murmured Buelna. "But—why—I do not understand."

"I think I begin to," cried Martiarena.

"Señor, you do not," protested Felipe. "It is not to be explained. I know what you believe. On my honour, I love Buelna."

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"Your actions give you the lie, then, young man. Bah! Nonsense. What fool's play is all this? Kiss him, Buelna, and have done with it."

Felipe gnawed his nails.

"Believe me, oh, believe me, Señor Martiarena, it must not be."

"Then an explanation."

For a moment Felipe hesitated. But how could he tell them the truth—the truth that involved Rubia and his disloyalty, temporary though that was? They could neither understand nor forgive. Here, indeed, was an *impasse*. One thing only was to be said, and he said it. "I can give you no explanation," he murmured.

But Buelna suddenly interposed.

"Oh, please," she said, pushing by Felipe, "uncle, we have talked too long. Please let us go. There is only one explanation. Is it not enough already?"

"By God, it is not!" vociferated the old man, turning upon Felipe. "Tell me what it means. Tell me what this means."

"I cannot."

"Then I will tell *you!*" shouted the old fellow in Felipe's face. "It means that you are a liar and a rascal. That you have played with Buelna, and that you have deceived me, who have trusted you as a father would have trusted a son. I forbid you to answer me. For the sake of what you were I spare you now. But this I will do. Off of my rancho!" he cried. "Off my rancho, and in the future pray your God, or the devil, to whom you are sold, to keep you far from me."

"You do not understand, you do not understand," pleaded Felipe, the tears starting to his eyes. "Oh, believe me, I speak the truth. I love your niece. I love Buelna. Oh, never so truly, never so devoutly as now. Let me speak to her; she will believe me."

But Buelna, weeping, had ridden on.

THE RIDING OF FELIPE

II

UNZAR

A fortnight passed. Soon a month had gone by. Felipe gloomed about his rancho, solitary, taciturn, sidling the sheep-walks and cattle-ranges for days and nights together, refusing all intercourse with his friends. It seemed as if he had lost Buelna for good and all. At times, as the certainty of this defined itself more clearly, Felipe would fling his hat upon the ground, beat his breast, and then, prone upon his face, his head buried in his folded arms, would lie for hours motionless, while his pony nibbled the sparse alfalfa, and the jack-rabbits limping from the sage peered at him, their noses wrinkling.

But about a month after the meeting and parting with Buelna, word went through all the ranches that a hide-roger had cast anchor in Monterey Bay. At once an abrupt access of activity seized upon the rancheros. Rodeos were held, sheep slaughtered, and the great tallow-pits began to fill up.

Felipe was not behind his neighbours, and, his tallow once in hand, sent it down to Monterey, and himself rode down to see about disposing of it.

On his return he stopped at the wine shop of one Lopez Catala, on the road between Monterey and his rancho.

It was late afternoon when he reached it, and the wine shop was deserted. Outside, the California August lay withering and suffocating over all the land. The far hills were burnt to dry, hay-like grass and brittle clods. The eucalyptus trees in front of the white shop (the first trees Felipe had seen all that day) were coated with dust. The plains of sagebrush and the alkali flats shimmered and exhaled pallid mirages, glistening like inland seas. Over all blew the trade-wind; prolonged, insistent,

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harassing, swooping up the red dust of the road and the white powder of the alkali beds, and flinging it—white-and-red banners in a sky of burnt-out blue—here and there about the landscape.

The wine shop, which was also an inn, was isolated, lonely, but it was comfortable, and Felipe decided to lay over there that night, then in the morning reach his rancho by an easy stage.

He had his supper—an omelet, cheese, tortillas, and a glass of wine—and afterward sat outside on a bench smoking innumerable cigarettes and watching the sunset.

While he sat so a young man of about his own age rode up from the eastward with a great flourish, and giving over his horse to the *muchacho*, entered the wine shop and ordered dinner and a room for the night. Afterward he came out and stood in front of the inn and watched the *muchacho* cleaning his horse.

Felipe, looking at him, saw that he was of his own age and about his own build—that is to say, twenty-eight or thirty, and tall and lean. But in other respects the difference was great. The stranger was flamboyantly dressed: skintight pantaloons, fastened all up and down the leg with round silver buttons; yellow boots with heels high as a girl's, set off with silver spurs; a very short coat faced with galloons of gold, and a very broad-brimmed and very high-crowned sombrero, on which the silver braid alone was worth the price of a good horse. Even for a Spanish Mexican his face was dark. Swart it was, the cheeks hollow; a tiny, tight moustache with ends truculently pointed and erect helped out the belligerency of the tight-shut lips. The eye were black as bitumen, and flashed continually under heavy brows.

"Perhaps," thought Felipe, "he is a *toreador* from Mexico."

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The stranger followed his horse to the barn, but, returning in a few moments, stood before Felipe and said:

"Señor, I have taken the liberty to put my horse in the stall occupied by yours. Your beast the *muchacho* turned into the *corral*. Mine is an animal of spirit, and in a *corral* would fight with the other horses. I rely upon the señor's indulgence."

At ordinary times he would not have relied in vain. But Felipe's nerves were in a jangle these days, and his temper, since Buelna's dismissal of him, was bitter. His perception of offence was keen. He rose, his eyes upon the stranger's eyes.

"My horse is mine," he observed. "Only my friends permit themselves liberties with what is mine."

The other smiled scornfully and drew from his belt a little pouch of gold dust.

"What I take I pay for," he remarked, and, still smiling, tendered Felipe a few grains of the gold.

Felipe struck the outstretched palm.

"Am I a *peon*?" he vociferated.

"Probably," retorted the other.

"I will take pay for that word," cried Felipe, his face blazing, "but not in your money, señor."

"In that case I may give you more than you ask."

"No, by God, for I shall take all you have."

But the other checked his retort. A sudden change came over him.

"I ask the señor's pardon," he said, with grave earnestness, "for provoking him. You may not fight with me nor I with you. I speak the truth. I have made oath not to fight till I have killed one whom now I seek."

"Very well; I, too, spoke without reflection. You seek an enemy, then, señor?"

"My sister's, who is therefore mine. An enemy truly. Listen, you shall judge. I am absent from my home a

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year, and when I return what do I find? My sister betrayed, deceived, flouted by a fellow, a nobody, whom she received a guest in her house, a fit return for kindness, for hospitality! Well, he answers to me for the dishonour."

"Wait. Stop!" interposed Felipe. "Your name, señor."

"Unzar Ytuerate, and my enemy is called Arillaga. Him I seek and—"

"Then you shall seek no farther!" shouted Felipe. "It is to Rubia Ytuerate, your sister, whom I owe all my unhappiness, all my suffering. She has hurt not me only, but one—but— Mother of God, we waste words!" he cried. "Knife to knife, Unzar Ytuerate. I am Felipe Arillaga, and may God be thanked for the chance that brings this quarrel to my hand."

"You! You!" gasped Unzar. Fury choked him; his hands clutched and unclutched—now fists, now claws. His teeth grated sharply while a quivering sensation as of a chill crisped his flesh. "Then the sooner the better," he muttered between his set teeth, and the knives flashed in the hands of the two men so suddenly that the gleam of one seemed only the reflection of the other.

Unzar held out his left wrist.

"Are you willing?" he demanded, with a significant glance.

"And ready," returned the other, baring his forearm. Catala, keeper of the inn, was called.

"Love of the Virgin, not here, señors. My house—the *alcalde*—"

"You have a strap there." Unzar pointed to a bridle hanging from a peg by the doorway. "No words; quick; do as you are told."

The two men held out their left arms till wrist touched wrist, and Catala, trembling and protesting, lashed them together with a strap.

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"Tighter," commanded Felipe; "put all your strength to it."

The strap was drawn up to another hole.

"Now, Catala, stand back," commanded Unzar, "and count three slowly. At the word 'three', Señor Arillaga, we begin. You understand?"

"I understand."

"Ready. . . . Count."

"One."

Felipe and Unzar each put his right hand grasping the knife behind his back as etiquette demanded.

"Two."

They strained back from each other, the full length of their left arms, till the nails grew bloodless.

"Three!" called Lopez Catala in a shaking voice.

III

RUBIA

When Felipe regained consciousness he found that he lay in an upper chamber of Catala's inn upon a bed. His shoulder, the right one, was bandaged, and so was his head. He felt no pain, only a little weak, but there was a comfortable sense of brandy at his lips, an arm supported his head, and the voice of Rubia Ytuerate spoke his name. He sat up on a sudden.

"Rubia, *you!*" he cried. "What is it? What happened? Oh, I remember, Unzar—we fought. Oh, my God, how we fought! But you—What brought you here?"

"Thank Heaven," she murmured, "you are better. You are not so badly wounded. As he fell he must have dragged you with him, and your head struck the threshold of the doorway."

"Is he badly hurt? Will he recover?"

"I hope so. But *you* are safe."

"But what brought you here?"

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"Love," she cried; "my love for you. What I suffered after you had gone! Felipe, I have fought, too. Pride was strong at first, and it was pride that made me send Unzar after you. I told him what had happened. I hounded him to hunt you down. Then when he had gone my battle began. Ah, dearest, dearest, it all came back, our days together, the life we led, knowing no other word but love, thinking no thoughts that were not of each other. And love conquered. Unzar was not a week gone before I followed him—to call him back, to shield you, to save you from his fury. I came all but too late, and found you both half dead. My brother and my lover, your body across his, your blood mingling with his own. But not too late to love you back to life again. Your life is mine now, Felipe. I love you, I love you." She clasped her hands together and pressed them to her cheek. "Ah, if you knew," she cried; "if you could only look into my heart. Pride is nothing; good name is nothing; friends are nothing. Oh, it is a glory to give them all for love, to give up everything; to surrender, to submit, to cry to one's heart: 'Take me; I am as wax. Take me; conquer me; lead me wherever you will. All is well lost so only that love remains.' And I have heard all that has happened—this other one, the Señorita Buelna, how that she forbade you her lands. Let her go; she is not worthy of your love, cold, selfish——"

"Stop!" cried Felipe, "you shall say no more evil of her. It is enough."

"Felipe, you love her yet?"

"And always, always will."

"She who has cast you off; she who disdains you, who will not suffer you on her lands? And have *you* come to be so low, so base and mean as that?"

"I have sunk no lower than a woman who could follow after a lover who had grown manifestly cold."

"Ah," she answered sadly, "if I could so forget my

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pride as to follow you, do not think your reproaches can touch me now." Then suddenly she sank at the bedside and clasped his hand in both of hers. Her beautiful hair, unbound, tumbled about her shoulders; her eyes, swimming with tears, were turned up to his; her lips trembled with the intensity of her passion. In a voice low, husky, sweet as a dove's, she addressed him. "Oh, dearest, come back to me; come back to me. Let me love you again. Don't you see my heart is breaking? There is only you in all the world for me. I was a proud woman once. See now what I have brought myself to. Don't let it all be in vain. If you fail me now, think how it will be for me afterward—to know that I—I, Rubia Ytuerate, have begged the love of a man and begged in vain. Do you think I could live knowing that?" Abruptly she lost control of herself. She caught him about the neck with both her arms. Almost incoherently her words rushed from her tight-shut teeth.

"Ah, I can *make* you love me! I can make you love me," she cried. "You shall come back to me. You are mine, and you cannot help but come back."

"*Por Dios, Rubia,*" he ejaculated, "remember yourself. You are out of your head."

"Come back to me; love me."

"No, no."

"Come back to me."

"No."

"You cannot push me from you," she cried, for, one hand upon her shoulder, he had sought to disengage himself. "No, I shall not let you go. You shall not push me from you! Thrust me off and I will embrace you all the closer. Yes, *strike* me if you will, and I will kiss you."

And with the words she suddenly pressed her lips to his.

Abruptly Felipe freed himself. A new thought suddenly leaped to his brain.

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"Let your own curse return upon you," he cried. "You yourself have freed me; you yourself have broken the barrier you raised between me and my betrothed. You cursed her whose lips should next touch mine, and you are poisoned with your own venom."

He sprang from off the bed, and catching up his *serape*, flung it about his shoulders.

"Felipe," she cried, "Felipe, where are you going?"

"Back to Buelna," he shouted, and with the words rushed from the room. Her strength seemed suddenly to leave her. She sank lower to the floor, burying her face deep upon the pillows that yet retained the impress of him she loved so deeply, so recklessly.

Footsteps in the passage and a knocking at the door aroused her. A woman, one of the escort who had accompanied her, entered hurriedly.

"Señorita," cried this one, "your brother, the Señor Unzar, he is dying."

Rubia hurried to an adjoining room, where upon a mattress on the floor lay her brother.

"Put that woman out," he gasped as his glance met hers. "I never sent for her," he went on. "You are no longer sister of mine. It was you who drove me to this quarrel, and when I have vindicated you what do you do? Your brother you leave to be tended by hirelings, while all your thought and care are lavished on your paramour. Go back to him. I know how to die alone, but as you go remember that in dying I hated and disowned you."

He fell back upon the pillows, livid, dead.

Rubia started forward with a cry.

"It is you who have killed him," cried the woman who had summoned her. The rest of Rubia's escort, *vaqueros*, *peons*, and the old *alcalde* of her native village, stood about with bared heads.

"That is true. That is true," they murmured. The old *alcalde* stepped forward.

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"Who dishonours my friend dishonours me," he said. "From this day, Señorita Ytuerate, you and I are strangers." He went out, and one by one, with sullen looks and hostile demeanour, Rubia's escort followed. Their manner was unmistakable: they were deserting her.

Rubia clasped her hands over her eyes.

"*Madre de Dios, Madre de Dios,*" she moaned over and over again. Then in a low voice she repeated her own words: "May it be a blight to her. From that moment may evil cling to her, bad luck follow her; may she love and not be loved; may friends desert her, her sisters shame her, her brothers disown her—"

There was a clatter of horse's hoofs in the courtyard.

"It is your lover," said her woman coldly from the doorway. "He is riding away from you."

"—and those," added Rubia, "whom she has loved abandon her."

I V

B U E L N A

Meanwhile Felipe, hatless, bloody, was galloping through the night, his pony's head turned toward the *hacienda* of Martiarena. The Rancho Martiarena lay between his own rancho and the inn where he had met Rubia, so that this distance was not great. He reached it in about an hour of vigorous spurring.

The place was dark though it was as yet early in the night, and an ominous gloom seemed to hang about the house. Felipe, his heart sinking, pounded at the door, and at last aroused the aged superintendent, who was also a sort of *major-domo* in the household, and who in Felipe's boyhood had often ridden him on his knee.

"Ah, it is you, Arillaga," he said very sadly, as the moonlight struck across Felipe's face. "I had hoped never to see you again."

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"Buelna," demanded Felipe. "I have something to say to her, and to the *padron*."

"Too late, señor."

"My God, dead?"

"As good as dead."

"Rafael, tell me all. I have come to set everything straight again. On my honour, I have been misjudged. Is Buelna well?"

"Listen. You know your own heart best, señor. When you left our little lady was as one half dead; her heart died within her. Ah, she loved you, Arillaga, far more than you deserved. She drooped swiftly, and one night all but passed away. Then it was that she made a vow that if God spared her life she would become the bride of the Church—would forever renounce the world. Well, she recovered, became almost well again, but not the same as before. She never will be that. So soon as she was able to obtain Martiarena's consent she made all the preparations—signed away all her lands and possessions, and spent the days and nights in prayer and purifications. The Mother Superior of the Convent of Santa Teresa has been a guest at the *hacienda* this fortnight past. Only to-day the party—that is to say, Martiarena, the Mother Superior, and Buelna—left for Santa Teresa, and at midnight of this very night Buelna takes the veil. You know your own heart, Señor Felipe. Go your way."

"But not *till* midnight!" cried Felipe.

"What? I do not understand."

"She will not take the veil *till* midnight?"

"No, not *till* then."

"Rafael," cried Felipe, "ask me no questions now. Only *believe* me. I always have and always will love Buelna. I swear it. I can stop this yet; only once let me reach her in time. Trust me. Ah, for this once trust me, you who have known me since I was a lad."

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He held out his hand. The other for a moment hesitated, then impulsively clasped it in his own.

"*Bueno*, I trust you then. Yet I warn you not to fool me twice."

"Good," returned Felipe. "And now *adiós*. Unless I bring her back with me you'll never see me again."

"But, Felipe, lad, where away now?"

"To Santa Teresa."

"You are mad. Do you fancy you can reach it before midnight?" insisted the *major-domo*.

"I will, Rafael; I will!"

"Then Heaven be with you."

But the old fellow's words were lost in a wild clatter of hoofs, as Felipe swung his pony around and drove home the spurs. Through the night came back a cry already faint:

"*Adiós, adiós*."

"*Adiós, Felipe*," murmured the old man as he stood bewildered in the doorway, "and your good angel speed you now."

When Felipe began his ride it was already a little after nine. Could he reach Santa Teresa before midnight? The question loomed grim before him, but he answered only with the spur. Pépe was hardy, and, as Felipe well knew, of indomitable pluck. But what a task now lay before the little animal. He might do it, but oh! it was a chance!

In a quarter of a mile Pépe had settled to his stride, the dogged, even gallop that Felipe knew so well, and at half-past ten swung through the main street of Piedras Blancas—silent, somnolent, dark.

"Steady, little Pépe," said Felipe; "steady, little one. Soh, soh. There."

The little horse flung back an ear, and Felipe could feel along the lines how he felt for the bit, trying to get a grip of it to ease the strain on his mouth.

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The *De Profundis* bell was sounding from the church tower as Felipe galloped through San Anselmo, the next village, but by the time he raised the lights of Arcata it was black night in very earnest. He set his teeth. Terra Bella lay eight miles farther ahead, and here from the town-hall clock that looked down upon the plaza he would be able to know the time.

"Hoopa, Pépe; pronto!" he shouted.

The pony responded gallantly. His head was low; his ears in constant movement, twitched restlessly back and forth, now laid flat on his neck, now cocked to catch the rustle of the wind in the chaparral, the scurrying of a rabbit or ground-owl through the sage.

It grew darker, colder, the trade-wind lapsed away. Low in the sky upon the right a pale, dim belt foretold the rising of the moon. The incessant galloping of the pony was the only sound.

The convent toward which he rode was just outside the few scattered huts in the valley of the Rio Esparto that by charity had been invested with the name of Caliente. From Piedras Blancas to Caliente between twilight and midnight! What a riding! Could he do it? Would Pépe last under him?

"Steady, little one. Steady, Pépe."

Thus he spoke again and again, measuring the miles in his mind, husbanding the little fellow's strength.

Lights! Cart lanterns? No, Terra Bella. A great dog charged out at him from a dobe, filling the night with outcry; a hayrick loomed by like a ship careening through fog; there was a smell of chickens and farmyards. Then a paved street, an open square, a solitary pedestrian dodging just in time from under Pépe's hoofs. All flashed by. The open country again, unbroken darkness again, and solitude of the fields again. Terra Bella past.

But through the confusion Felipe retained one picture,

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that of the moon-faced clock with hands marking the hour of ten. On again with Pépe leaping from the touch of the spur. On again up the long, shallow slope that rose for miles to form the divide that overlooked the valley of the Esparto.

"Hold, there! Madman to ride thus. Mad or drunk. Only desperadoes gallop at night. Halt and speak!"

The pony had swerved barely in time, and behind him the Monterey stage lay all but ditched on the roadside, the driver fulminating oaths. But Felipe gave him but an instant's thought. Dobe huts once more abruptly ranged up on either side the roadway, staggering and dim under the night. Then a wine shop noisy with carousing *peons* darted by. Pavements again. A shop-front or two. A pig snoring in the gutter, a dog howling in a yard, a cat lamenting on a rooftop. Then the smell of fields again. Then darkness again. Then the solitude of the open country. Cadenassa past.

But now the country changed. The slope grew steeper; it was the last lift of land to the divide. The road was sown with stones and scored with ruts. Pépe began to blow; once he groaned. Perforce his speed diminished. The villages were no longer so thickly spread now. The crest of the divide was wild, desolate, forsaken. Felipe again and again searched the darkness for lights, but the night was black.

Then abruptly the moon rose. By that Felipe could guess the time. His heart sank. He halted, recinched the saddle, washed the pony's mouth with brandy from his flask, then mounted and spurred on.

Another half-hour went by. He could see that Pépe was in distress; his speed was by degrees slackening. Would he last! Would he last? Would the minutes that raced at his side win in that hard race?

Houses again. Plastered fronts. All dark and grey. No soul stirring. Sightless windows stared out upon

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emptiness. The plaza bared its desolation to the pitiless moonlight. Only from an unseen window a guitar hummed and tinkled. All vanished. Open country again. The solitude of the fields again; the moonlight sleeping on the vast sweep of the ranchos. Calpella past.

Felipe rose in his stirrups with a great shout. At Calpella he knew he had crossed the divide. The valley lay beneath him, and the moon was turning to silver the winding courses of the Rio Esparto, now in plain sight.

It was between Calpella and Proberta that Pépe stumbled first. Felipe pulled him up and ceased to urge him to his topmost speed. But five hundred yards farther he stumbled again. The spume-flakes he tossed from the bit were bloody. His breath came in labouring gasps.

But by now Felipe could feel the rising valley-mists; he could hear the piping of the frogs in the marshes. The ground for miles had sloped downward. He was not far from the river, not far from Caliente, not far from the Convent of Santa Teresa and Buelna.

But the way to Caliente was roundabout, distant. If he should follow the road thither he would lose a long half-hour. By going directly across the country from where he now was, avoiding Proberta, he could save much distance and precious time. But in this case Pépe, exhausted, stumbling, weak, would have to swim the river. If he failed to do this Felipe would probably drown. If he succeeded, Caliente and the convent would be close at hand.

For a moment Felipe hesitated, then suddenly made up his mind. He wheeled Pépe from the road, and calling upon his last remaining strength, struck off across the country.

The sound of the river at last came to his ears.

"Now, then, Pépe," he cried.

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For the last time the little horse leaped to the sound of his voice. Still at a gallop, Felipe cut the cinches of the heavy saddle, shook his feet clear of the stirrups, and let it fall to the ground; his coat, belt, and boots followed. Bareback, with but the headstall and bridle left upon the pony, he rode at the river.

Before he was ready for it Pépe's hoofs splashed on the banks. Then the water swirled about his fetlocks; then it wet Felipe's bare ankles. In another moment Felipe could tell by the pony's motion that his feet had left the ground and that he was swimming in the middle of the current.

He was carried down the stream more than one hundred yards. Once Pépe's leg became entangled in a sunken root. Freed from that, his hoofs caught in grasses and thick weeds. Felipe's knee was cut against a rock; but at length the pony touched ground. He rose out of the river trembling, gasping, and dripping. Felipe put him at the steep bank. He took it bravely, scrambled his way—almost on his knees—to the top, then stumbled badly and fell prone upon the ground.

Felipe twisted from under him as he fell and regained his feet unhurt. He ran to the brave little fellow's head.

"Up, up, my Pépe. Soh, oh."

Suddenly he paused, listening. Across the level fields there came to his ears the sound of the bell of the convent of Santa Teresa tolling for midnight.

* * * * *

Upon the first stroke of midnight the procession of nuns entered the nave of the church. There were some thirty in the procession. The first ranks swung censers; those in the rear carried lighted candles. The Mother Superior and Buelna, the latter wearing a white veil, walked together. The youngest nun followed these two, carrying upon her outspread palms the black veil.

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Arrived before the altar the procession divided into halves, fifteen upon the east side of the chancel, fifteen upon the west. The organ began to drone and murmur, the censers swung and smoked, the candle-flames flared and attracted the bats that lived among the rafters overhead. Buelna knelt before the Mother Superior. She was pale and a little thin from fasting and the seclusion of the cells. But, try as she would, she could not keep her thoughts upon the solemn office in which she was so important a figure. Other days came back to her. A little girl gay and free once more, she romped through the hallways and kitchen of the old *hacienda* Martiarena with her playmate, the young Felipe; a young school-girl, she rode with him to the Mission to the instruction of the *padre*; a young woman, she danced with him at the *fête* of All Saints at Monterey. Why had it not been possible that her romance should run its appointed course to a happy end? That last time she had seen him how strangely he had deported himself. Untrue to her! Felipe! Her Felipe; her more than brother! How vividly she recalled the day. They were returning from the Mission, where she had prayed for his safe and speedy return. Long before she had seen him she heard the gallop of a horse's hoofs around the turn of the road. Yes, she remembered that—the gallop of a horse. Ah! how he rode—how vivid it was in her fancy. Almost she heard the rhythmic beat of the hoofs. They came nearer, nearer. Fast, furiously fast hoof-beats. How swift he rode. Gallop, gallop—nearer, on they came. They were close by. They swept swiftly nearer, nearer. What—what was this? No fancy. Nearer, nearer. No fancy this. Nearer, nearer. These—ah, Mother of God—are real hoof-beats. They are coming; they are at hand; they are at the door of the church; they are *here!*

She sprang up, facing around. The ceremony was interrupted. The frightened nuns were gathering about

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the Mother Superior. The organ ceased, and in the stillness that followed all could hear that furious gallop. On it came, up the hill, into the courtyard. Then a shout, hurried footsteps, the door swung in, and Felipe Arillaga, ragged, dripping, half fainting, hatless and stained with mud, sprang toward Buelna. Forgetting all else, she ran to meet him, and, clasped in each other's arms, they kissed one another upon the lips again and again.

The bells of Santa Teresa that Felipe had heard that night on the banks of the Esparto rang for a wedding the next day.

Two days after they tolled as passing bells. A beautiful woman had been found drowned in a river not far from the house of Lopez Catala, on the high road to Monterey.

THE END

DATE DUE

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